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From deformed leg to national championship

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NSIDE:
- A section on Mennonite education
- To bring Christ into the world
- Groff named interim editor
- Video games: danger or opportunity?
- Farewell

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ON THE COVER: Photo by Jim Tolen

TheMennonite
January 2014 | Volume 17, Number 1

The Mennonite is the publication of Mennonite Church USA, which established three purposes for the magazine: to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, to promote the ministries of Mennonite Church USA and to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first Tuesday of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Elkhart, IN 46517 and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for one year: $46 to U.S. addresses and $54 USD to Canadian addresses. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite*, or the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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Mennonite Church USA

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite*, 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

About John Howard Yoder

Dan Steiner's letter, "What to do about Yoder," conjectures that John Howard Yoder might have had Asperger's Syndrome. Steiner speaks sympathetically about people on the autism spectrum, but we are concerned that the article leads readers to assume people on the high end of the autism spectrum are prone to abusive behaviors. This implication is particularly troubling in his sentence: "People on the high end of the autism spectrum have many of the characteristics John Howard Yoder displayed; included, most strikingly, is his high intellect and brilliant scholarship *alongside his tragically abusive behaviors* and social isolation" (emphasis ours).

Though Steiner may have intended the phrase we italicized to describe only Yoder, in this context it wrongly suggests that abusive behaviors are a characteristic of those on the autism spectrum. Speculating or implying that any disability is the cause of abusive behavior seems to us as inappropriate as it would be to attribute abusive behavior to someone's race. When we encourage such speculation, we add to the stigma and discrimination these people face every day.

Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADNet) affirms Dan in his lifelong work providing services for people with autism and other special needs as we also work to promote such understanding. In doing so, we encourage us all to remember that people with disabilities, including those on the autism spectrum, are people first. As such, ou sisters and brothers on the spectrum are far more complex than labels and diagnostic categories. While we do not condone abusive behavior, let's treasure the gifts their differences bring to our faith communities and not inadvertently add to the burden of stigma we place on them.—*Timothy Burkholder, ADNet executive director, and Christine Guth, ADNet program director*

The controversy over John Howard Yoder continues. I'm beginning to thin his victims and those offended by him should demand that his body be exhumed so that he can be given a proper public execution. Maybe that will bring "closure."

Some human problems are beyond our ability to fix the way we would like As Ervin Stutzman suggests in several recent columns, God must lead the way.—*Carl Hege, Aberdeen, Idaho*

Creatures perish for our benefit

Regarding "Jesus in the Temple" (October 2013): I am perplexed that Andy Alexis-Baker would use such a thin theological argument to make a point that, in the end, tends to support the scientific-evolutionary contention that we humans aren't all that different from the "other" animals.

I have lived near and cared for and used domestic animals all my life. We have always tried to give them the best life possible. Somewhere along the line I came to appreciate the concept of sacrifice as a paradigm for our use of them In the created order of things one kind of creature perishes for the benefit of another all the way from soil microbes to buffalo and wolves.

I am no more enamored with "factory farming" than the next creation-care practitioner, but it is the end result of looking for the maximum return from whatever source, to which so many are addicted. The same mentality has also resulted in the mining of the prairies down to a completely depleted resource and then attempting to continue production by pouring on nutrients from somewhere else. A mixed animal economy has the ability to rebuild soil and produce both animals and plants for our (human) benefit and sustenance. It can also store a great deal of the excess carbon we continue to spew into the atmosphere.

So, before or along with condemning our use of meat, we should reflect on the way so many have elevated different "nonhuman" animals to a human status as part of their families, thereby lowering their own humanity. This becomes a stewardship issue, as is our care for the earth. Let's not jump to drastic conclusions as we still don't comprehend the whole picture of our interdependence.—*Elton Kauffman, Bluesky, Alberta*

Fracking is immoral

Regarding "Cash Royalties from Fracking Bring Temptation to Amish" (Miscellany, November 2013): I am really glad that you covered this issue. We all want to know how Amish and Mennonite land owners are dealing with the fracking issue and with money offers from oil developers to drill and frack our lands. Unfortunately, the Associated Press coverage of the issue that ran in *The Mennonite* only covered one aspect of the fracking issue: money. The article failed to cover the most important aspect of the fracking issue: the moral, ethical and spiritual side of the issue. We are called to be stewards of the earth. Fracking ruins the earth. It poisons the land, it poisons the ground water, it wastes huge amounts of fresh water that must be pumped into the wells, it exacerbates global warming, it forces dangerous chemicals deep into the earth—chemicals that the oil companies do not have to disclose and will always remain under the ground after fracking is completed.

So the issue really comes down to money and greed versus being stewards of the earth. And so, I wish the article had also addressed the moral and spiritual aspect of the fracking issue. —*Jim Musselman, San Francisco, Calif.*

Jesus' relationship to his Father

In "When God Became a Baby" (December 2013), Gordon Houser oversimplifies the range of Christian belief concerning the relationship between Jesus and God. First off, Arius certainly accepted the divinity of Jesus: He simply thought that Jesus had a "subordinate" form of divinity. He did this not out of speculative hubris but on scriptural grounds. Many other faithful Christians have followed Arius along this "heretical" path. This group includes adoptionists, Dutch Mennonite Collegiants, Polish Anabaptists, Isaac Newton and John Milton. The Nicene Creed should not be seen as the essence of our faith; it is one quite creative work of theology, but there are other, more scriptural ways of describing Jesus' relation to his Father. —*Mitchell Brown, Evanston Ill.*

Climate change and racism

About 10 years ago I was listening to a speaker at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., discussing climate change. He made the statement that this was the biggest issue facing the world today. A student beside me asked, "Even bigger than racism?"

The speaker's answer has informed my understanding of this issue ever since. He said, "When climate change begins significantly affecting the earth, who will suffer most?" The answer is self-evident. In every nation and part of the globe, the poor will be least able to mitigate the effects of changing climate whether it be because they are not able to move, to raise the crops they once raised, because rising water has

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

The Hollinger-Janzens turned down requests from other people wanting to tell the story of their son, Femi, who was born in Benin with a deformed leg but was miraculously healed (page 12). We are honored to be entrusted with their story and found Femi to be a fine young man. He is also a member of the 2012 national championship soccer team.

"Out of his own personality and his experiences," says Rod, his father, "including changing cultures as a child, he has been shaped into someone who warmly and deliberately accepts and welcomes everyone. ... we are excited to see where God will lead him."

In this issue we also publish the annual theme section on Mennonite schools (beginning on page 16). We are grateful for the articles and photos provided by the Mennonite Education Agency staff.

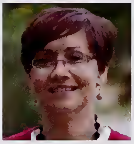
The news section leads off on page 32 with the announcement that Anna Groff, currently an associate editor with *The Mennonite*, has been appointed interim editor by the board of The Mennonite, Inc. She will begin this new role with our February issue. The editorial is the last one for this editor (page 56).

At a Constituency Leadership Council meeting last fall, Everence president Larry Miller laid out his dream for how Mennonite Church USA can increase in faithful stewardship and be financially viable into the future. We publish Miller's presentation in this month's News Analysis (pages 44-45).

This issue is the first for our new designer. Mary Jo Veurink, from Broadway, Va., succeeds long-time designer Dee Birkey. Our designers are responsible for the cover and pages 12-29. Welcome, Mary Jo!

I wish the current staff and board members all the best.—*Editor*

Marty Lehman resigns from role with MC USA



ELKHART, Ind.—Marty Lehman, staff person for the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board (EB), announced her resignation on Dec. 4, 2013.

Her final date in this role may be as late as this December. She has been serving as associate executive director for churchwide operations since July 2004.

"I have enjoyed my time with Mennonite Church USA," she said on Dec. 4. "I have been given opportunities I never imagined possible. I've met people who have inspired and mentored me. I've had the opportunity to see and experience Mennonite Church USA from the West Coast to the East Coast from the North to the South. It has been a blessing beyond words. I am so grateful to God for this rich experience."

Prior to joining the EB staff in 2004, Lehman served as president at Adriel in West Liberty, Ohio, and in administrative roles with Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Board of Missions and Goshen (Ind.) College.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Courtesy photo

KANSAS SENIOR OLYMPICS
SHAWNEE COUNTY
PARKS AND RECREATION

Professor to volunteer for 2014 Winter Games

Allison McFarland (above), a professor of business and economics at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan., is going to the Olympics. Although she is a triple medalist (two gold, one silver) in the 2012 Kansas Senior Olympics, she is not actually competing in the XXII Olympic Winter Games in Sochi, Russia, Feb. 7-23. Instead, she'll be a volunteer, or "event services team member." Around 180,000 people, most of them from Russia, applied to be Winter Games volunteers. McFarland was one of an estimated 29,000 selected.—*Bethel College*

Lily Endowment grants Goshen College $1 million

GOSHEN, Ind.—Goshen College has received a $1 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to help establish stronger career counseling, foster student entrepreneurship and promote internships and other experiential learning opportunities at the college.

The grant, which is part of the Endowment's "Initiative to Promote Opportunities Through Educational Collaborations," is meant to boost efforts to enhance and expand opportunities for college graduates to find meaningful employment in Indiana.

The college plans to use the grant to fund several initiatives. Some funds will go toward an endowment for the Student Entrepreneurship Grant Program, which has been awarding entrepreneurship grants to students since 2005. The college will introduce a "pathways to careers" program to all first-year students and develop programs for students to interact with local businesses and explore career opportunities. It also will create a new program that connects local businesses with graduates, resulting in real job experience and possible employment. —*Goshen College*

Carol Rose to resign as CPT director

CHICAGO—Carol Rose, director of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) for 10 years, has announced she will resign during this year.

Rose wrote on the organization's website: "I am delighted with the growth in CPT. Though next year I will be moving to other work, I will continue … as part of CPT's support and action. I am waiting in eager expectation to see where the next generation of leadership will guide us."—*CPT*

Congregation shares unexpected windfall

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—First Mennonite Church of Ransom, Kan., a worshiping congregation of 30 people, found itself with an unexpected windfal of cash and decided it should be shared rather than held. So the congregation decided to donate $4,000 to each of the following agencies:

- Mennonite Church USA;
- Western District Conference;
- Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary;
- Mennonite Central Committee;
- Mennonite Disaster Service;
- Heifer International;

- Building fund for a new congregation in Elkhart, Ind.

"We praise God for financial blessing, "says Eldon Epp, pastor of the congregation.—*Western District Conference*

ADNet's Christine Guth receives Christian Leadership award

WATERTOWN, Wis.—Bethesda Lutheran Communities, a national provider of support services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, has awarded Christine Guth, program director for the Anabaptist Disability Network (ADNet), Elkhart, Ind., with its Christian Service Award.

Guth has applied an insider's perspective to building inclusive congregations for people with developmental disabilities. Guth's motivation comes from her personal struggle with depression, and her experiences raising two children with autism.

Bethesda's Christian Service Award is given annually to those who serve the Lord through their dedication to the Christian nurture of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Guth and Bob, her husband, are members of Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.—*Bethesda Lutheran Communities*

Photo provided

Men's retreat

About 30 men gathered Oct. 18-20, 2013, at Camp Friedenswald, Cassopolis, Mich., for an annual men's retreat. Gareth Brandt (above), who teaches practical theology at Columbia Bible College in Abbotsford, British Columbia, spoke on "Under Construction: Men, Spirit and Wholeness." Terry Shue, director of leadership development for Mennonite Church USA, led the Sunday morning worship with a sending and response message.—*Mennonite Men*

Mission Focus journal names new editors and plans new format

ELKHART, Ind.—Three organizations and two new editors are collaborating to renew *Mission Focus*, a valued journal that is a voice for sharing Anabaptist-Mennonite experience, history, research and resources for the church in mission.

Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonite Mission Network and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary will launch the renewed publication this year as an electronic journal with print copies available on demand. New editors represent two of these organizations: Jamie Ross, International Ministries department assistant for Mission Network, and Jamie Pitts, assistant professor of Anabaptist studies at AMBS. A new name for the journal is still to be determined.

An organizing committee consisting of representatives from the three sponsoring agencies has set a vision for *Mission Focus* that includes goals of providing practical, scholarly, reflective, visionary, energetic and useful content. A wide range of voices will represent many perspectives and experiences from around the world.

The audience for *Mission Focus* will be mission workers, missiologists and missional pastors in the traditional Anabaptist denominations as well as in newer, Anabaptist-associated movements. Ross hopes the journal will be a resource for laypeople and pastors, students and professors, missionaries and administrators. Froese describes the future readers as both curious and experienced, global as well as North American—those who traditionally might be interested in mission but also those who are not professional ministers.—*AMBS*

Camp Friedenswald names executive director

CASSOPOLIS, Mich.—Jenna Liechty Martin has been named the new executive director of Camp Friedenswald and begins this month.

Selected from a strong pool of candidates, Liechty Martin was chosen for her solid organizational, interpersonal and leadership skills.

Liechty Martin comes to Camp Friedenswald from Mennonite Mission Network, where she has most recently been working in development.

Prior to her current work, she served through Mission Network for three years in Belfast, Northern Ireland, along with her husband, Peter Martin.

Liechty Martin also has experience in management and admissions as well as strong Friedenswald ties.

Originally from Goshen, Ind., Liechty Martin graduated from Bluffton (Ohio) University with a degree in business administration.
—*Camp Friedenswald*

Mark Regier appointed to US SIF board of directors

GOSHEN, Ind.—US SIF: The Forum for Sustainable and Responsible Investment has appointed Mark A. Regier, director of stewardship investing for Praxis Mutual Funds and Everence Financial, to its board of directors. His term begins this year.

US SIF is the trade association for professionals, firms, institutions and organizations in the United States engaged in sustainable and responsible investing. The organization promotes investment practices that consider environmental, social and corporate governance criteria to generate positive social impacts and competitive long-term financial returns.—*Everence*

This year do something extraordinary

Cyneatha Millsaps is pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill.

A new year is dawning, and the old year is quickly fading away.

This year we will stick to those diets and exercise routines.

This year we will visit the family more.

This year we will be more giving.

This year we will not allow things/people to upset or distract us.

This year we will be more like Christ.

Each New Year prompts us to make plans and changes we hope will lead us in a new direction that will make our lives better. We examine our life and challenge ourselves to make the proper changes, which will lead us to be better people. The New Year reminds us that we have another chance.

This is the season when we celebrate the birth and life of our Savior. We remember his ministry, his stories and his promises, which make us want to be better. We quickly find that like our many New Year's resolutions our quest to be more like Christ can be a difficult task. We slip back into our human nature and settle into our routine lives. And even though we tithe and attend a worship service every week, give offerings to assist the many ministries that our church community supports and volunteer with local programs, if we're honest we are only following our usual routines.

Let us try to be like Jesus by standing in a different place.

But what if we start this year with a better plan? What if we start this year with a different dream? What if we start this year with great intention to be like Jesus? What if we abandoned our routine lives and did something extraordinary? Christ moved all around meeting new people. Christ brought hope and healing to those who were in need. What if this year our hope was to offer ourselves as gifts of God?

Several years ago, I had the privilege of serving food to the homeless in Miami, Fla. It was an experience, to say the least. I witnessed nuns who did not worry whether or not it would be enough food because they knew God would provide. I watched homeless men and women coming off the streets for a hot meal with smiles on their faces and laughter among one another. I was blessed to see Jesus differently that day. It was nothing of what I expected. It was emotionally challenging to see so many people in need of foo Yet I was able to experience the peace of Christ.

I remember thinking, How are we going to feed all these people? Where did they all come from? And in an instant I felt as small as an ant i this big world, which was out of my control. The line was long, and I was sure we would run out o food. But those nuns never wavered. They kept cooking and serving without any concern for the long line of hungry people. How could this be possible? I thought. Why aren't they concerned? Tha is when I learned that they serve 300 people dail for breakfast and lunch. They never ask for donations, yet donated food comes every day. They never make food plans; they cook what is available. And miraculously there is always enough. What kind of Go is this that sends his children t one spot and his other childre provide hot meals with little to no preparation? I would learn that day, it is a God of extraord nary possibilities. It is a God o hope and love.

Ministry has never been the same since I spent the da with those nuns in Miami. Because of them I understand that God is doing amazing work all around us; we just need to get out in his world and join in God's work. Stepping out of our routines, our traditions and our customs and experiencing God in someone else's backyard can be exhilarating.

This year, join a pickup game of basketball in another neighborhood. Go to the golf course and instead of playing a round of golf try being someone's caddy. Go to a public place and simply open doors for people as they go by. This year, organiz a neighborhood block party in someone else's neighborhood.

This year stand on the side of the road and ask for financial help, then give the donations to a local charity. This year do something extraordinary. This year let us try to be like Jesus by standing in a different place. TM

The witness of Regina Mondez

On the morning of Nov. 7, 2013, Regina Mondez, along with most people of the Philippines, was anxiously tracking the radar images of a massive storm heading directly toward them. Even before super typhoon Haiyan slammed into the islands of the central Philippines, with wind speeds approaching 200 miles per hour, she and other members of Peace Church, a small house fellowship in Manila supported by Mennonite Church Canada Witness, were thinking about how they would need to respond.

When the typhoon made landfall several hours later, the destruction of the storm's wind, rain and tidal surge defied description. In addition to the 6,000 reported fatalities, an estimated 14 million people, including 1.8 million children, were displaced by the storm, with hundreds of villages devastated and a major city, Tacloban, almost completely destroyed. As the Filipino government struggled to respond, millions of people in the region—living without power, shelter, food, water or security—grew increasingly desperate.

By all objective measures, the Mennonite presence in the Philippines is tiny. As the world's 12th most populated country, the Philippines is home to nearly 100 million citizens—80 percent of them Catholic. Mennonites, by contrast, number a mere 1,000: around 200 from the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite; another 150 affiliated with various conservative or plain fellowships and the rest associated with the Integrated Mennonite Churches (IMC), whose 21 congregations are scattered around the central island of Luzon, a region not directly affected by the recent storm.

Yet Regina and the volunteers from Peace Church were undeterred. Within a few days, they joined a team organized by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and its partner organization, Peacebuilders Community, and headed for the city of Ormoc on Leyte island. There, working closely with local pastors, they helped establish a network for the efficient distribution of relief assistance that was just beginning to arrive.

Regina Mondez is the face of a new generation of Mennonites in the global church. In the early 1980s, her parents joined the Conservative Mennonite church in Lumban, attracted by its biblical emphasis on peace and a strong sense of community. Though the family eventually left that congregation, frustrated by its restrictions on education, Regina recalls the church as her "second home—it was my family." During her studies at the University of the Philippines, Regina became more aware of the deep-seated realities of poverty and injustice in her country, and dedicated herself to working for social and political reforms. After completing a degree in development communication, she moved to the island of Mindanao, a region devastated by poverty and decades of guerilla warfare and inter-religious violence. For the next two years, she worked as a volunteer with PeaceBuilders Community, an organization supported by MCC, IMC and Mennonite Church Canada Witness that has trained hundreds of local pastors and village leaders in the basic principles of conflict transformation and restorative justice.

That experience restored in Regina a deep appreciation for the Mennonite church and the theological roots of her peacemaking activities. "I had a weak grasp of Anabaptist teachings growing up," Regina says. "But as I heard peace advocates, government workers and even military officers express appreciation for the Mennonite witness to peace, my understandings of faith began to deepen." For the past three years, Regina has served as IMC's national coordinator, supporting the work of the Board of Trustees and Board of Bishops. She is a charter member of Peace Church, a newly-established congregation in Global City, Manila, that is bringing a vigorous peace witness to the heart of Manila's military and political establishment. In 2010, Regina wrote a history of the Mennonite church in the Philippines as a chapter in the Asia volume of the Mennonite World Conference Global Mennonite History series and is serving as the research associate for the MWC Global Anabaptist Profile in her country. Only 23, she also has a full-time job.

In recent decades, the Mennonite church in the Philippines has suffered divisions that have left some of the young people disillusioned. "I want to help our church become a family that is not divided by culture or ethnicity," Regina says. She dreams one day of helping establish an Anabaptist school in the Philippines "that would enable IMC to develop more leaders who are reliant, efficient and successful without losing the particularity of their cultural or ethnic identity."

The challenges facing the Mennonite churches in the Philippines—disaster relief, peacebuilding or church renewal—can seem overwhelming. But I am inspired by the witness of Regina Mondez. TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

I want to help our church become a family that is not divided by culture or ethnicity.
—Regina Mondez

Experiencing God is hard work

Surveys show that Americans are into the supernatural. Some would say obsessed. According to a 2011 Associated Press poll, 80 percent of Americans believed in angels—even 40 percent of those who never went to church. A 2009 poll from the Pew Research Center reported that 20 percent of Americans experienced ghosts, and 1 in 7 had consulted a psychic. A 2005 Gallup poll found that 75 percent of Americans believed in something paranormal and that 40 percent said that houses could be haunted.

In an article published on Oct.14, 2013, in the *New York Times*, T.M. Luhrmann, an anthropologist at Stanford University, surveys some studies of this phenomenon.

Some scholars, she writes, believe these date show that belief in the supernatural is hard-wired. She refers to anthropologist Pascal Boyer, author of *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origin of Religious Thought*, and psychologist Justin L. Barrett, author of *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?*, who argue that the fear that one would be eaten by a lion or killed by a man who wanted your stuff shaped the way our minds evolved.

"Our hunter-gatherer ancestors were more likely to survive if they interpreted ambiguous noise as the sound of a predator," Luhrmann writes. "Most of the time it was the wind, of course, but if there really was danger, the people who worried about it were more likely to live."

The thinking here is that the search for an agent evolved into an intuition that an invisible agent, or god, may be there. Luhrmann notes that this theory can be argued from different theological positions. Boyer is an atheist and treats religion as a mistake. Barrett is an evangelical Christian who thinks God's hand steered evolution.

Luhrmann argues, however, that intuition and sober faith are two different things. She asks us to consider how some people attempt to make what can only be imagined feel real. "They do this by trying to create thought-forms, or imagined creatures, called tulpas," she writes. "Their human creators are trying to imagine so vividly that the tulpas start to seem as if they can speak and act on their own."

That term, she explains, comes from the explorer Alexandra David-Néel, who wrote that Tibetan monks created tulpas as a spiritual discipline during intense meditation. Tulpa practice has now become popular, with dozens of sites on the Internet with instructions on creating one.

Luhrmann describes how these work. She interviewed a young man who set aside an hour and a half each day for this. "He'd spend the first 40 minutes or so relaxing and clearing his mind. Then he visualized a fox (he liked foxes). After four weeks, he started to feel the fox's presence and to have feelings he thought were the fox's."

Later, he stopped spending all that time meditating, and the fox went away. Luhrmann concludes that "experiencing an invisible companion as truly present—especially as an adult—takes work: constant concentration, a state that resembles prayer."

"This very difficulty may be why evangelical churches emphasize a personal, intimate God," she writes, and why "churches that rely on a relatively impersonal God (like mainstream Protestant denominations) have seen their congregations dwindle over the last 50 years."

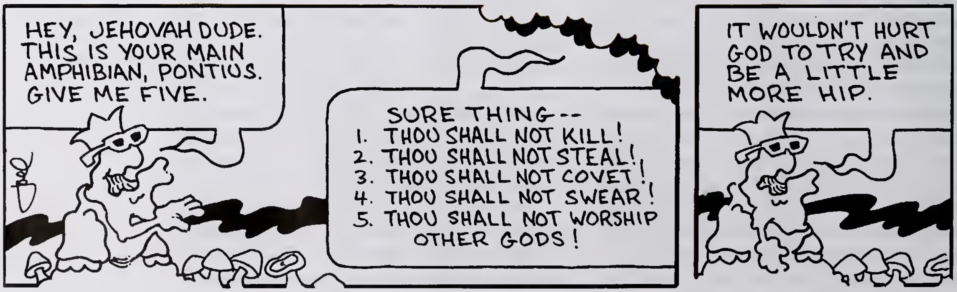
This will not surprise those familiar the centuries-long tradition of Christian mysticism, which delves into the work of contemplation, paradoxical as that sounds.

Luhrmann ends her essay thus: "Secular liberals sometimes take evolutionary psychology to mean that believing in God is the lazy option. But many churchgoers will tell you that keeping God real is what's hard."

I wonder how much Mennonites are emphasizing the work of experiencing God's presence.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


HEY, JEHOVAH DUDE. THIS IS YOUR MAIN AMPHIBIAN, PONTIUS. GIVE ME FIVE.
SURE THING--
1. THOU SHALL NOT KILL!
2. THOU SHALL NOT STEAL!
3. THOU SHALL NOT COVET!
4. THOU SHALL NOT SWEAR!
5. THOU SHALL NOT WORSHIP OTHER GODS!
IT WOULDN'T HURT GOD TO TRY AND BE A LITTLE MORE HIP.

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—compiled by Gordon Houser

> “I prefer a church that is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets rather than a church that is unhealthy from being confirmed and from clinging to its own security.”
>
> —Pope Francis

What makes a good old age?

1. The ability to talk or communicate with others: 93 percent rated this extremely or very important.
2. The ability to get “enjoyment out of life,” 90 percent
3. The ability to feed yourself, 89 percent
4. Living without severe pain, 87 percent
5. Retaining long-term memory, and feeling worthwhile in what you do, tied at 83 percent
6. Being able to dress yourself, 81 percent
7. Retaining short-term memory for events of the day, 71 percent

—*Religion News Service*

Hunger pains

Many people who back cuts to food stamps argue that the program encourages dependency. However 47 percent of those who benefit from food stamps are children, and another 26 percent are adults who live with children. A rigorous study in 2011 concluded that getting food stamps has a statistically insignificant effect on whether recipients seek jobs. William A. Galston in the *Wall Street Journal* (Nov. 6, 2013) says the fight over government food assistance is motivated by ideology rather than defects in the system and is ultimately a disagreement over “our collective obligation to the least fortunate Americans.”—*Christian Century*

Young farmworkers face a workplace fatality rate

4x

that of children in other industries.—*The Nation*

Remote control

When airman Brandon Bryant began work as a drone operator, he thought he was part of a force for good. After six years of working from a base in Nevada, sitting at a console with vivid and violent scenes of Afghan and Pakistani villages 7,000 miles away, he changed his mind. His views about the morality of the operation changed when he saw a child vaporized on the screen and saw hundreds of people blown to bits. He walked away from a $109,000 bonus with a severe case of PTSD and a final kill count of 1,626. “The number made me sick to my stomach,” he said.—*Christian Century*

In 1952,

32%

of all the revenue generated in this country came from large corporations. Today, less than

10%

come from corporate America.—*The Nation*

Avoiding the phrase ‘climate change’

Charles Rice, a soil science professor at Kansas State University, told USA Today: “If you talk to farmers, they’ll say, ‘Well, my ponds are drying up, my animals have more heat stress and I’m planting two weeks earlier.’ They’re saying all the right things, but they can’t spit out ‘climate change’ because it’s been politically tainted.”
—*The Marketplace*

Church giving at Depression-era lows

According to a new report by Empty Tomb, a Christian research group, the percentage of a church member’s income given to the church dropped to 2.3 percent in 2011 (the latest year for which numbers are available), down from 2.4 percent in 2010. Giving has declined for four consecutive years, according to the report; the only other period of prolonged decline in giving per member was from 1928 through 1934, almost entirely during the Great Depression.—*Religion News Service*

Numbers to ponder

- Median hourly wage for fast-food workers nationwide: $8.94/hour
- Increase in median wages for food service workers since 1999: $0.10/hour
- Last time the federal minimum wage exceeded $8.94/hour (in 2012 dollars): 1968
- Change in the real value of the minimum wage since 1968: -22 percent
- Median age of fast-food workers: 29
- Median age of female fast-food workers: 32
- Percentage of fast-food workers who are women: 65
- Percentage of fast-food workers older than 20 who have kids: 36
- Income of someone earning $8.94/hour: $18,595/year
- Federal poverty line for a family of three: $17,916/year
- Income of someone earning $15/hour: $31,200/year
- Income needed for a “secure yet modest” living for a family with two adults and one child … in the New York City area: $77,378/year, in rural Mississippi: $47,154/year

—*Mother Jones*

From deformed leg to national championship

Femi playing in the NCAA championship game in 2012. Photo by Jim Tolen

Femi Hollinger-Janzen is a blessing of God to his family, his congregation and beyond.

by Everett J. Thomas

On Dec. 14, 1993, mission worker Lynda Hollinger-Janzen was serving at a church-based health-care center in the West African country of Benin. In the maternity department, women would arrive well into labor, pay $3 to have their babies' umbilical cords cut with sterile instruments, then leave a few hours later.

"Someone brought in an abandoned child," the maternity doctor said, bursting into the room where Lynda was doing paperwork. "What are we going to do?"

"God spoke to me, 'This baby is for you,' " Lynda says. "I wasn't looking for a baby."

The baby was very small, and his leg was deformed. It bent inward in a U-shape (see photo at right).

Lynda, after checking with her family, took him to her home on a motorcycle taxi. So the little boy joined Lynda, Rod and two older sisters, 6-year old Mimi and 3-year-old Rachel.

"The girls were very welcoming," Lynda says. "We had evening devotions with an Advent wreath, so it was kind of like baby Jesus came to our house."

Rebecca Assani, a Nigerian friend, came to the house that evening. She named the baby Oluwafemi, which means, "God loves me."

"You would not have survived if God didn't love you," Rebecca said to Femi.

Another older woman came and prophesied over the infant. Comparing Femi's rescue to that of the infant Moses, she and the 13 other people who visited that evening called him Moïse.

Because there is a lot of child trafficking in Benin, Lynda and Rod let everyone know about the abandoned infant.

"We thought we would keep him for several weeks until there was an opening in an orphanage," Lynda says.

When Femi was 3 months old, Lynda and Rod connected with the birth mother, who was in jail.

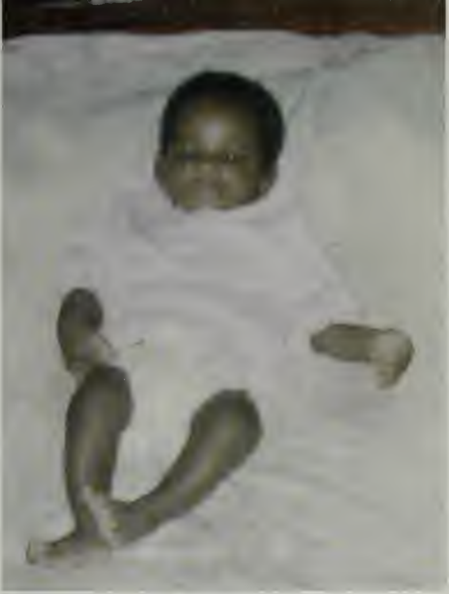
"I took one look and knew she was the mother," Lynda says. The mother identified Femi's father as a man who had a family in another village.

When Femi was 6 months old, the Hollinger-Janzens were scheduled to return to the United States on furlough. But they had not yet adopted Femi and could not take him along.

The family often worshiped with the Universal Evangelical Church, an African Independent church that was "very Anabaptist," according to Lynda. Friends in the church offered to keep Femi while the Hollinger-Janzens were away.

But what to do about this little boy's deformed leg?

Lynda took Femi to a specialist who said the boy would need to be in a body cast for six months if there was to be any hope of walking. But even with the cast the outcome was uncertain. However, Jean and Virginie Yehouenou, the church friends who offered to keep Femi, were



Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

Comparing Femi's rescue to that of the infant Moses, an older woman and the 13 other people who visited that evening called him Moïse.

Lynda and Rod Hollinger-Janzen in Benin in 2000 with their children (from left), Femi, Rachel and Mimi. Photo by Wayne Gehman

Nathan Lindell Detweiler and Femi Hollinger-Janzen have been bosom buddies from their first year of life, when their parents served through Mennonite Mission Network in Benin, West Africa. Photo by Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

In spite of his local and regional fame, Femi remains grounded in his faith and credits his congregation and his mentor.

Femi with his mentor, Vance Weaver. Photo by Dee Birkey

Femi tells the children's story at his congregation, Waterford Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind. Photo by Dee Birkey

not willing to subject the active baby to such a constraint.

"We will keep him," they said, "but not in a body cast. We will pray, and you will see what God will do."

Femi began walking at 10 months, and the deformity gradually disappeared.

"After four years," Lynda says, "we did not notice it anymore. We see it as God's intervention. A potentially huge problem was taken care of."

After Femi's birth mother's stint in jail, the Hollinger-Janzen family connected with her.

"She came to live with us for two and half years," Lynda says. "She was a street kid. We thought if she experienced love she would be able to love her child. But that strategy did not work."

When Femi was 6, the birth father signed off on Femi being adopted, and the birth mother was considered legally incapable of caring for her child. A family court judge then granted Femi's adoption into the Hollinger-Janzen family.

The family returned to Goshen, Ind., in 2000, when Femi was 6, and connected with the Waterford Mennonite Church. Femi attended Bethany Christian School in Goshen, where he had an outstanding soccer career: a school record 67 goals plus 23 assists in four years, named 2011 Indiana Gatorade Player of the Year and 2011 Indiana Player of the Year. In 2012, the Goshen City Council passed a resolution honoring Femi's stellar high school career.

Today he plays forward-midfielder on the Indiana University (in Bloomington) soccer team During Femi's first year there in 2012-2013, the IU soccer team won the national championship. Femi appeared on the cover of a March *Sports Illustrated* along with some other athletes.

In spite of his local and regional fame, Femi remains grounded in his faith and credits his congregation and his mentor.

"Waterford Mennonite Church is a great example of what a Mennonite family can be," Femi says. Of his mentor, Vance Weaver, he says, "I don't know if I'd be the person I am today—with the morals and values I have—if it weren't for Vance."

Femi is what is known as a "third-culture kid," meaning he is in a third culture from his parent's and the one in which he grew up. But growing up in a mostly white Midwestern U.S town was not difficult.

"As a kid," Femi says, "I didn't know any difference. I don't remember people picking on me because I am African and American."

Celebrating an NCAA championship. Photo by Jim Tolen

Femi defends against a play from eventual 2013 champion Notre Dame in a match last fall. Photo by Everett Thomas

With the gifts Femi has been given and the skills he is developing, we are excited to see where God will lead him.

Now a second-year student at IU, Femi continues to play soccer and has decided to major in sports management.

Lynda works as a writer for Mennonite Mission Network, working out of the Elkhart, Ind., offices. Rod is the executive coordinator for Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, working from a Goshen office. Mimi works at Conrad Grebel University in Waterloo, Ontario, and Rachel is a registered nurse living in Dearborn, Mich.

"Femi is a blessing of God to our family, our congregation and beyond," says Rod Hollinger-Janzen. "Out of his own personality and his experiences, including changing cultures as a child, he has been shaped into someone who warmly and deliberately accepts and welcomes everyone. With the gifts he has been given and the skills he is developing, we are excited to see where God will lead him."

Everett J. Thomas is editor of The Mennonite.

Lyle Miller, pastor of family life and financial stewardship at Waterford Mennonite Church (left), and Loanne Harms, a former Waterford pastor, baptize Femi on Aug. 5, 2012. Both pastors mentored Femi during the years he participated in Mennonite Youth Fellowship. Photo by Dee Birkey

North American Mennonite high schools welcome international students from around the world.

Global village in the backyard

by Melanie Hess

Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School students in a computer lab. LMS photo

When the founders of Mennonite high schools in North America began to develop their campuses, they probably didn't imagine the Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Ethiopian and Colombian students who would fly halfway around the world to attend. Neither could they have envisioned Chinese pop music floating from a dormitory, Korean drums in chapel or Colombian worship leaders.

But in 2013-14, many Mennonite high schools have an international student presence. Bethany Christian Schools (Goshen, Ind.), Central Christian School (Kidron, Ohio), Christopher Dock Mennonite High School (Lansdale, Pa.), Eastern Mennonite School (Harrisonburg, Va.), Freeman (S.D.) Academy, Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School, Rockway Mennonite Collegiate (Kitchener, Ontario) and Western Mennonite School (Salem, Ore.) are a few of the schools that have opened their doors to students from around the world.

Introducing students of different cultures into a high school campus has its challenges. The natural tendency to clump together into groups of "people like me" can sometimes rear its head. But faculty, staff and U.S. students all say their campuses benefit from the presence and contributions of international students, and the U.S. students who seek out friendships with international students are rewarded with fresh perspectives and new ideas.

In the classroom

For teachers, having students from around the world in their classes is a real benefit.

"In one of my classes, I realized I had five different countries represented," says Zach Bower, a history and social studies teacher at Christopher Dock. "That generates a lot of rich discussion."

That discussion is important to guidance counselors like Cathi Hunsberger, who works on Christopher Dock's curriculum committee. "We often talk about the global perspective," she says, "but having students as a part of our community really brings that home. We're one community, getting to know each other."

And Dorcas Lehman, campus pastor and counselor at Lancaster Mennonite School, says LMS probably wouldn't have Chinese classes as part of its curriculum if it wasn't for the Chinese international students on campus. "It really is the global village," she says. "Millennials are the first generation to experience the day-to-day global village, and in a way, that global village comes to us."

Heather Rudy, a senior at LMS, has benefited from the global village on her campus. "When you talk with someone from another country, you understand world issues and social issues in a different way," she says. "I viewed China as a country and a culture, and I didn't look at the modern day social structure. Now I've learned how they view women and how they view men, how they view occupations, how they view Japan—I knew there was tension, but not the depth or the reasons. I learned not from a textbook but from the people themselves."

As a Chinese student on an American campus, Catherine Huang, a student at Central Christian School, believes it's important to have international students on campus to fight misperceptions about other cultures. "Talking to people from different backgrounds gives you different perspectives," she says. "The nice thing is you don't have to agree with everything everyone says, but you learn from it. Many Americans have stereotypes of another culture; it's good to let American students learn from real people."

Kathy Moyer, who teaches English at Christopher Dock, says she has given up making assumptions. "I used to make assumptions about international students, but our international students are like other students," she says. "But because they're away from home, they have needs that you just don't think of right away. So I'm learning and growing, too."

Faith formation

Having students from around the world come to campus can be an eye-opening faith experience, as well.

"Exposure to our international students has helped us to recognize God's people on a global scale," says Jim Buller, Bethany Christian School's admissions counselor. "It helps us think about other ways to look at the world."

Christopher Dock Mennonite High School student Edwin Kim. Christopher Dock photo

Many of the international students on Mennonite school campuses are not Christians. They come for education at an American school, and while they are aware of the beliefs of their host school, they don't necessarily share them.

Far from being a problem, however, numerous teachers and students say the outside perspective on their own beliefs was important.

Zach Bower, who is the liaison between Christopher Dock and Dock House, where international students can board, says working with international students has helped him develop a deeper sense of compassion. "I see these students having to live in a culture [where] they're the outsiders," he says. "I experienced a deep sense of empathy and it's changed me. I haven't been forced to do that in my own life."

Katherine McCoy, a sophomore at LMS, developed a close friendship with Chinese student Vivi ▶

Song, who wasn't a Christian. Song's perspective made McCoy take a look at her own faith. "She had morals that were identical to Christian morals: be kind, treat someone else the way you'd want to be treated," McCoy says. "She was attracted to Christianity because it had things in common with what she believed. She went to a conservative nondenominational church and got a Lutheran experience and a Mennonite experience. Her questions made me think about why I believe the things I believe."

Lachelle Hackman, a dorm advisor at LMS, says she had an experience that forced her to think about the rituals and culture connected to North American Christianity when she offered to pray for a Chinese student who was sick.

"She said 'yes' but had never prayed before," says Hackman, who prayed for the student in her dorm room. "When I was done praying, she asked, 'Do you always have to face your door? Do you have to close your eyes?' Thinking about that changed my perspective. I thought more about how I can pray anytime, and I wanted to put that into words that are easy to understand."

One international student at LMS, a senior last year, said she'd never met a Christian before coming to LMS. "She knew about Christianity and wasn't enthralled with what she had heard," says Jon Heinly, Lancaster Mennonite Conference youth pastor. "She got to come here and experience living with Christians and seeing that it's a way a life, not just a belief. Hearing her perspective forces us to reflect a little more on what we do and say and how we live."

Outside the classroom

Rich Martin, admissions counselor at Western Mennonite School, says he enjoys seeing the ways international students and U.S. students come together, especially as the school year progresses. "It's fun to watch," Martin says. "As the year goes on, international students get integrated, and it's fun to see friendships develop over the course of a basketball season or a soccer season."

Martin says Western's International Club gives international students a way to share their food and traditions with U.S. students, and international week includes meals from places like Ethiopia that allow many students to experience a different kind of cuisine.

At many of the Mennonite schools, international students are hosted with families. LMS has a dormitory as well as host families, and Christopher Dock recently opened Dock House as a home-away-from-home for international students.

Soccer fans at Bethany Christian Schools in Goshen, Ind. Bethany photo

Kayla Alderfer, a senior at Christopher Dock, says she has enjoyed building friendships outside school with international students. "Language doesn't have to be a barrier," she says. "There's a common perception that international students don't want to talk. I think some might be anxious about their English, but if you give them an opportunity and are patient, many of them love having an opportunity to talk to someone."

At LMS, international students have participated in the school's Music Friday, playing songs or singing, sometimes with instruments unfamiliar to their U.S. audience. The spring drama at Christopher Dock featured a one-act play based on a Chinese proverb that was chosen specifically to involve international students.

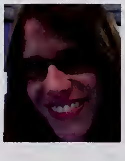
"Seeing the students work together toward a common goal made me think, Wow, I don't know where else I would've been able to experience something like that," says Zach Bower.

The students who host international students learn about their international friends' music and food preferences, enjoy each other's company and often get invited to visit China or Korea.

And students from the same country who may not know each other become friends, as do international students from diverse countries.

"We're trying to demonstrate the value of inclusivity in the dorms," says Hackman. "It's hard whenever you have a group of people living together, but we're learning about how we influence each other."

"For me, it's about hospitality," says Dorcas Lehman. "What does it mean for a Christian school with Anabaptist values to also be a hospitable place to people of other faiths or no faith—whether international or not?"



Melanie Hess is a technical editor and freelance writer from Lancaster, Pa.

Cross-cultural distinctives

Goshen College students in Egypt. Goshen College photo

The long, innovative tradition of cross-cultural education continues at Mennonite colleges.

by Andrew Jenner

Within days of landing in Botswana, Kali Emans and her classmates from Bluffton (Ohio) University arrived in the small village of Pitseng, where they spent much of their three-week cross-cultural study program. Their visit coincided with a teachers' strike, which came at an inopportune moment for students of Pitseng, soon to face an important test to determine if and how their formal educations would continue.

Emans, an education major, and others decided to help by tutoring 15 or so students preparing for the test. One of the best things Emans found she had to offer was working with the students on their English, the test language.

In the evenings, Emans stayed with a host family; the near-total language barrier that existed between her and them made things difficult at first. Before long, though, these two things—tutoring English learners and the anxiety of not being able to communicate with people around her—coalesced into something bigger: Emans decided to become an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher.

"It just opened my eyes … to see the struggles because of language barriers that children deal with on a day-to-day basis," says Emans, who graduated in 2013 and now is a high school ESL instructor in Fuquay-Varina, N.C. "Me experiencing that [language barrier] in another country allows me to relate to students experiencing that in a classroom here."

Hers is one of countless such stories of new clarity and life direction gained through cross-cultural study at a Mennonite college or university. And stories like these are a reason why, time and again, faculty and staff at these schools hear returning students describe these experiences as a, or the, highlight of college.

> Me experiencing that [language barrier] in another country allows me to relate to students experiencing that in a classroom here.
> —Kali Emans

Bluffton University student Amanda Woolley in Botswana. Bluffton University photo

Cross-cultural study programs at Mennonite colleges and universities are overwhelmingly developed and led by faculty and staff rather than outside vendors.

In decades past, the fact that Mennonite colleges allowed and encouraged students to study abroad (or in unfamiliar settings closer to home) was once distinctive in itself. Today, as study-abroad programs have become the rule rather than the exception in American higher education, cross-cultural programs at the five Mennonite-affiliated colleges or universities in the United States—Bethel College in North Newton, Kan., Bluffton University, Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in Harrisonburg, Va., Goshen (Ind.) College and Hesston (Kan.) College—remain at the leading edge of preparing students to live and work in an increasingly multicultural world.

"Our education is part of a belief and a faith tradition that all people in the world are really one people," says Paul Neufeld Weaver, cross-cultural program director at Bluffton University. "We want students to catch that vision."

While each Mennonite institution's cross-cultural program has unique characteristics, the following themes are common to most or all of them and distinguish these schools, as a group, from the crowd:

1. Decades of tradition and experience

Bethel College's Wuppertal exchange program may be one of the oldest exchange programs in the United States, according to Merle Schlabaugh, adjunct professor of German and Bethel's study abroad adviser. Continuously running since 1951, the exchange program with Bergische Universität in Wuppertal, Germany, runs two ways: This past fall, two Bethel students studied in Wuppertal, while two students from Germany enrolled in classes at Bethel.

In the mid-to-late 1960s, the first foreign study programs began at Bluffton and Goshen. Bluffton's earliest destination was Colombia, offered as either a 12-week or three-week program. Goshen launched its Study Service Term, or SST, in 1968, with programs in Costa Rica, Jamaica and Guadeloupe, while EMU's earliest cross-cultural trip, to the Middle East, was in 1972.

Hesston, a two-year college, has offered a multiweek choir trip—including heavy doses of Anabaptist history and humanities—to Europe every other year since 1980.

2. Cross-cultural study as a requirement

While nearly every university now offers some sort of cross-cultural study, few require it. Of those few are all the four-year Mennonite colleges or universities in the United States, which were also among the first to do so in the country.

At Goshen and EMU, most undergraduate students participate in one of several semester-long programs. Bluffton and Bethel each offer one semester-long program per year plus an assortment of several-week programs during breaks (EMU also offers some May programs).

Each of these schools also offers alternative cross-cultural study opportunities (usually involving interaction with an unfamiliar culture close to home) for students who are unable to study off-campus or transfer credit from other off-campus experiences.

3. Faculty leadership

Cross-cultural study programs at Mennonite colleges and universities are overwhelmingly developed and led by faculty and staff rather than outside vendors. Linda Martin Burkholder, interim director of cross-cultural programs at EMU, says faculty-led, semester-long programs are particularly distinctive, as most other universities' faculty-led trips occur during breaks.

Faculty leadership also gives individual programs their own academic flavor, depending on the leaders' expertise and life experience. A semester program to Central America led by a biologist, for example, could differ significantly from another program to the same destination led by a sociology professor.

4. Institutional commitment to cross-cultural education

Requiring students to earn cross-cultural credit requires a supportive atmosphere on campus, where advisors and professors understand cross-cultural study as part of a broader educational goal rather than an inconvenience to smooth academic progress.

At Goshen, for example, the fact that the SST program has been going for 45 years makes cross-cultural study and the on-campus adjustments it requires "embedded in the culture of the college," says Tom Meyers, associate academic dean and director of international education.

When so many students, faculty and staff go on an off-campus cross-cultural term, their experiences inevitably filter back to campus, where they can inspire, inform, influence and reinforce the underlying mission of cross-cultural education.

5. An immersion experience, far off the beaten path

According to recent estimates by the Institute of International Education, about half the American college students who study abroad go to Western Europe, mostly to just four countries: the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain and France.

The Mennonite college programs, though, have long sent students to destinations less closely related, culturally speaking, to our own. Collectively, they have sent students to dozens of countries all over the world.

"From the very beginning, we've tried to focus on countries that are significantly different from North American and European cultures," says Meyers.

In this vein, EMU's programs purposely minimize in traditional tourist areas, says Burkholder.

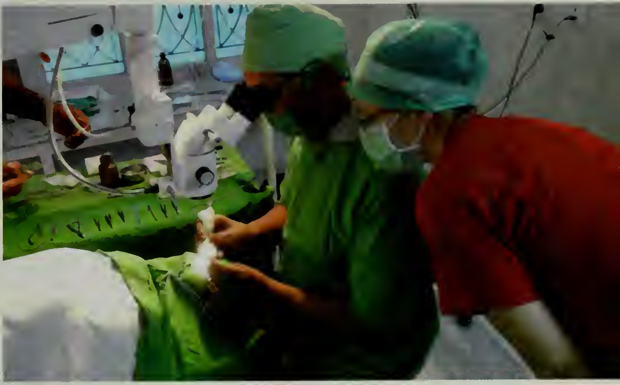
"We try very hard to create programs that are culturally immersive," she says. "[Students] are interacting with real people around real issues, … and that results in a deeper level of learning that we want for our students."

Home-stays with host families often play a significant part of achieving this and are among the most talked-about aspects of the cross-cultural trips after students return, says Burkholder. While all five Mennonite colleges and universities offer some cross-cultural programs that include home-stays, these are particularly prominent in Goshen's SST programs, most of which place students with host families for the entire semester.

6. Dramatic, long-lasting impacts on students' lives

One of the most profound effects of studying in another culture, says Schlabaugh, is the ability it gives students to "look at their own culture through different cultural lenses." By the time they get back home, participants are changed in all sorts of ways—pragmatically, spiritually, politically—that persist for years.

Katie Miller, who toured Europe with the Hesston choir in 2012, gained new appreciation for



Hesston College student Grace Schmidt watches a cataract surgery at Menno Clinic in India. Hesston College photo

During an interterm in Lesotho and South Africa that included home stays, Bethel College students try their hand (or their heads) at balancing and carrying water the way the village women did. Bethel College photo

EMU students in Bolivia. EMU photo by Cristina Graber Neufeld

"the rich history that our faith has" after visiting Anabaptist historical sites.

"I hadn't really ever thought much about the fact that the Anabaptists were persecuted so much that they had to hide in caves in the mountains," says Miller, now a senior music education major at EMU. "We had Communion [in one of those caves] … and took some time to reflect on what being Anabaptist means to us. … We have so much to be thankful for that we take for granted."

Practically speaking, the culturally immersive focus of these cross-cultural programs can force students to new levels of independence and self-sufficiency.

Philip Borkholder has used his good-paying computer programming job to help finance college educations for seven Central American students and fund other projects in their communities.

"The whole study abroad experience was one of the most formative of my whole life," says Lisa Thimm, an assistant professor of mathematics at Bethel who earned her undergraduate degree there in 2001.

Thimm spent the fall of 1999 in the Wuppertal exchange program before studying mathematics the following semester in Budapest, Hungary. Thimm lived alone in Budapest, where few people spoke English. This meant that life minutiae, like rent negotiations, often became adventures. Surviving and thriving on her own for months there gave Thimm new confidence in knowing she had "the capacity to figure things out and get things done."

Other alumni look back on careers directly shaped by their cross-cultural experiences. Rita Lopienski went with Goshen's SST program in 1976 to Haiti, where she taught violin lessons at a summer camp in the town of Léogâne. She enjoyed it so much that she returned for several more summers.

After graduating in 1978, Lopienski earned a master's degree in music education and became a music therapist based in Bartlett, Ill., where she works with hospital patients and residents of long-term health facilities.

Others experience a fundamental shift in the way they think and live. Philip Borkholder signed up for EMU's Central America cross-cultural in 1985, largely because a few friends were going. But after learning about the region's poverty and wars—and the American government's role in perpetuating these—Borkholder found himself simultaneously "radicalized" and in love with a once-unfamiliar part of the world.

"It was like someone took a big fire hose and washed out all the dirt around the roots of my life, and made me start all over again," he says.

He later spent five years in Central America with Mennonite Central Committee and, since returning to his home in Michigan, has maintained close ties to the communities he worked in. In conscious emulation of the way immigrant workers send remittances from their American jobs back home, Borkholder has used his good-paying computer programming job to help finance college educations for seven Central American students and fund other projects in their communities.

"It was a life-changing experience," he says. "There isn't a week that goes by where I don't remember something. It affected me forever."

Andrew Jenner is a freelance writer in Harrisonburg, Va., and a 2004 graduate of Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg.

hearing from **Mennonite Education Agency**

A different kind of **pastoral education**

Three schools address the needs of people who feel a tug toward pastoral ministry yet cannot follow the more traditional route of getting an M.Div. degree at a seminary.

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

Hesston College student Ron Moyo (left) speaks with Pastoral Ministries director Tim Lichti. Hesston College photo

While many pastors in Mennonite Church USA are trained in seminary and receive a Master of Divinity degree, many others have pursued a different kind of pastoral education.

Spending three years on the campus of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., or of Eastern Mennonite Seminary (EMS) in Harrisonburg, Va., is not feasible for many. People who feel called to pastoral work yet don't feel they can relocate for three years have wanted an alternative to the M.Div. degree.

Hesston College

In response to this need, Hesston (Kan.) College in 1985 began its Pastoral Ministries Program. Many congregations were unable to secure qualified pastoral leaders, and many mature men and women had affirmations of their call to pastoral ministry from a local church but could not afford the years of additional education required to earn a seminary degree and credentials.

Over the years, Hesston's program has drawn a variety of adult learners from across Mennonite Church USA as well as other Christian denominations. Graduates have ranged in age from mid-20s to mid-50s and older. Of approximately 145 graduates, more than 80 percent have gone on to serve somewhere in Mennonite Church USA. The majority go into a pastoral assignment in a congregation. Some become associate pastors, some lead pastors, while others accept assignments in missions or the chaplaincy in a retirement community or hospital.

AMBS

AMBS has two non-degree pastoral education programs, Journey: A Conference-based Leadership Development Program, and Pastoral Studies Distance Education (PSDE).

PSDE began in 1995 in response to an often-stated need of the church for pastoral education that would be accessible from a distance and targeted to pastors at the early college level. The Mennonite Board of Education (of the former Mennonite Church) developed Leading God's People, a five-unit course of study that covers the scope of pastoral ministry education at a basic level.

In 2003, ownership moved to AMBS. Through articulation agreements with Eastern Mennonite

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Lois Kauffman teaches in the Journey program at AMBS. AMBS photo

Sam Aberra, a native of Ethiopia, who graduated from the STEP training program in 2013. EMS photo

University (EMU) in Harrisonburg, Goshen (Ind.) College and Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Manitoba, students can earn 15 undergraduate credits for completion of the program.

Students report that they regularly use these materials to aid in their preaching and teaching. Their learning also helps shape how they do pastoral care and evangelism. PSDE also opens the door for students to participate in other kinds of Mennonite pastoral and theological education.

Journey began in 2003, after conference leaders from Central District and Indiana-Michigan conferences approached AMBS about developing a program to serve people already in leadership in their conferences who were not ready for, interested in or able to pursue a seminary degree. While it is geared to pastors, emerging pastors and lay ministers from those conferences, it is also open to participants from other conferences by special arrangement.

This and other programs not only train pastors generally but strengthen their understandings of what it means to be a leader in a Mennonite church, shapes their perspectives on Anabaptist/Mennonite theology and connects them to other Mennonite leaders.

EMS

EMS has three programs that provide alternative ways to train people for pastoral ministry. One is called STEP (Study and Training for Effective Pastoral Ministry). It was created in 2004 to provide college-level training for pastoral and ministry leaders already active in congregational settings. It is a partnership between EMU and Lancaster Mennonite Conference, with other area conferences also collaborating. It operates in two sites: Lancaster, Pa., and Philadelphia.

Three primary groups of students enroll in STEP:

- new pastors in traditional rural congregations
- pastors and ministry leaders in racial minority and immigrant congregations, often in urban settings;
- individuals and ministry leaders exploring a call to pastoral leadership.

STEP is unique in that students develop strong relationships through a three-year cohort experience. Actual ministry practice is a key component of competence and formation.

Gateway Courses were created by EMS in 2006 in Pennsylvania at the request of four Mennonite conferences: Atlantic Coast, Eastern District, Franconia and Lancaster. The courses focus on key Anabaptist-Mennonite identity themes and are available for audit or graduate seminary credit These are designed especially for pastors called to Mennonite congregations who do not have Anabaptist background and training.

The oldest program of this kind through EMS is called the Summer Institute for Spiritual Formation, which began in the early 1990s. It is being used by a variety of people. There is a strong emphasis on self-reflection and prayer, which often helps individuals discern the next steps in their faith journey.

These three schools of Mennonite Church USA are addressing the needs of people who feel a tug toward pastoral ministry yet cannot follow the more traditional route of getting an M.Div. degree at a seminary. This alternative has been available for almost 30 years, and its use is growing.—*Mennonite Education Agency*

IBA celebrates 25 years building leaders

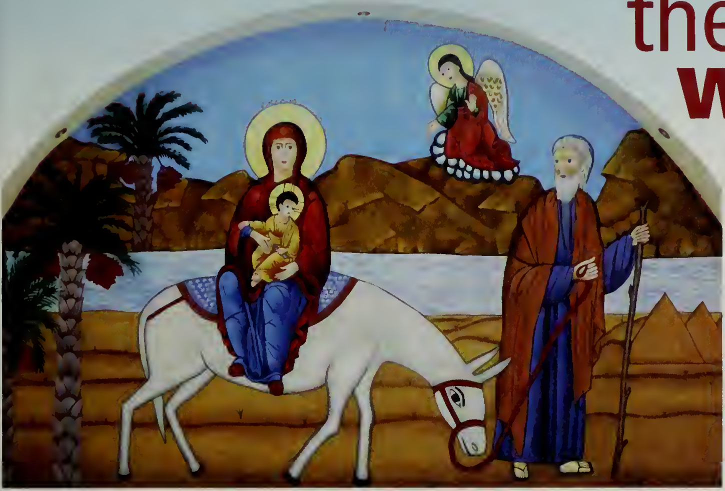
Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (IBA, Anabaptist Biblical Institute) celebrated its 25th anniversary last year. The program is designed for people at all educational levels to provide sound biblical teaching from an Anabaptist perspective in order to build capable, confident Hispanic leaders who serve not only their home congregations but Mennonite Church USA as a whole.

Founded in 1988 as a vision of the Hispanic Ministries department of the former General Conference Mennonite Church, IBA this year has more than 255 students enrolled in 39 IBA study centers, located throughout the United States. The number of centers has doubled in seven years. More than 50 volunteer tutors and coordinators facilitate the training.

The complete IBA training consists of 15 courses, and it costs $500 to provide one IBA course. IBA students pay less than 25 percent of the cost. Thus, IBA is working to raise funds to continue this ministry.

IBA and SeBAH (Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano) are programs of Hispanic Pastoral Leadership Education, which is directed by Rafael Barahona.—*MEA*

To bring **Christ** into the **world**



Many churches in Egypt display a picture or icon, like this one, of Mary, Joseph and Jesus seeking safety from King Herod in Egypt. Each Epiphany, Coptic Christians celebrate their ancestors' role in sheltering the Christ child.

MCC photo by Judith Snowdon

Learning from Coptic Orthodox Christians

by Thomas Snowdon

Christians in Egypt commemorate Christmas this year in the midst of great political and social instability. During the past three years, Egypt has had four different governments and two large-scale revolts, and an economic downturn has caused much unemployment and suffering. At times, Christians have been targeted and churches have been destroyed.

As Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) representatives in Egypt for the past three years, my wife, Judith, and I have lived and worked among the Christian community, the majority of whom belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church. ("Coptic" simply means Egyptian.) We have had the opportunity to learn from Coptic Christians and bear witness to their faith in the midst of adversity.

In all this political and social chaos, Christians have demonstrated great faith in God, and their fasting, prayer and celebrations have continued with even greater love and effort. Their observance of Christmas is no exception. Perhaps our Coptic brothers and sisters in Christ can inspire North American Christians to find new ways of honoring Christ's birth.

Coptic Christians began preparing for Christmas last Nov. 25, the first day of Advent in the Coptic Orthodox calendar (different from the Gregorian calendar), and conclude 43 days later on their Christmas Day, Jan. 7. During this time, they contemplate the heavy burden of Jesus' mother, Mary, who carried God's Son in her heart and in her womb. Coptic Orthodox Christians believe God gave Christians the same responsibility that Mary was given—to bring Christ into the world.

This understanding pervades the Advent, Christmas and Epiphany seasons. Since Christ is the Word of God in the flesh, Christians fast in preparation for the celebration of his birth. The period of fasting—abstaining from meat or dairy products—also mirrors the willingness, self-control and effort of Mary, who carried baby Jesus in her womb despite the difficulties

Coptic Orthodox Christians believe God gave Christians the same responsibility that Mary was given—to bring Christ into the world.

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This preparation for the Nativity creates a serious atmosphere of spiritual discipline.

this created for her as an unmarried woman. (The 43 days of fasting corresponds to the 40 days Moses fasted on Mount Sinai before receiving the Ten Commandments, plus three days the Copts fasted in the 10th century A.D. before God miraculously moved Mokattam Mountain in Egypt.)

Times of fasting throughout the Orthodox Christian world are accompanied by giving alms. This practice prevents the fasting from being just pietistic and self-focused. With so much poverty in Egypt, the needs of those who have so little are kept in focus. Churches maintain both local and denomination-wide service agencies that provide temporary relief to poor families, ministries to those in prisons and those with a broad range of living difficulties—both Christian and Muslim. They support large-scale development projects, in partnership with MCC, and micro-lending. They also give to people begging and selling small items on the streets, following God's call for generosity and openness to meet desperate need.

This preparation for the Nativity creates a serious atmosphere of spiritual discipline. It is neither the commercial event of the West nor an event preceded by weeks of pre-Christmas office parties, overeating and celebrations.

On Christmas Eve, Egyptian Christians gather in church for worship, Bible reading and prayer, which culminates in the celebration of Communion just after midnight. Children usually wear new clothes they have not worn until this special evening. Then families go to their homes to break the long fast with a Christmas feast that lasts long into the night hours, often until dawn.

At some point during the feast or after a nap on the next day, family members exchange modest gifts. Many churches hold parties on Christmas Day for children, who receive gift bags with small gifts of candy and toys. In many places, government officials go to the offices of the local bishops and bring greetings. To Copts, this is significant and a much-appreciated gesture in a majority Muslim country.

Twelve days after Christmas, Coptic Christians celebrate the Feast of Epiphany, on Jan. 19. This is a celebration of the baptism of Jesus and includes the blessing of water and the blessing of people's homes by their local priest.

Epiphany is also the time when Egyptian Christians celebrate an event held dear to them—Jesus and his parents taking refuge in Egypt to escape King Herod. According to Matthew 2:13-15, Herod wanted to kill the newborn king. Joseph was told to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus. It became a sanctuary for them, just as it had been for the children of Israel centuries before.

When Egypt has times of political calm, a ceremony takes place by the River Nile at Epiphany. The water is blessed, then a boat with people portraying the holy family crosses the Nile to celebrate this time of sanctuary. In the troubled Middle East, with millions of refugees fleeing Syria, it is poignant to remember that Jesus and his parents were refugees, seeking safety from danger at home by fleeing to a different land. With so much political and social tension in Egypt, this outdoor, public ceremony is only performed in a few remote places.

Many of us try to move away from the materialism that dominates the Christmas season in Canada and the United States. However, to be judgmental or standoffish about the many activities and invitations to celebrate with our families, neighbors, friends and work colleagues demonstrates the opposite of the spirit of Christ.

Perhaps, though, we could adopt fasting for as much of the Advent season as is possible, without refusing to participate in all those pre-Christmas parties. It is good to donate to MCC's Christmas giving projects, local community food banks, special community projects at our church, and make time to pray and contemplate the Scripture readings of the Advent season. These activities and many more take us to the heart of God the Son, who left the glories of heaven to be born in a manger, and the human efforts of Mary and Joseph as they found a new level of faith in coping with this amazing event in their lives.

The quiet, deep joy that comes to the Christian community here in Egypt at Christmas demonstrates to me that these efforts are not futile. We and they may not change the direction of an entire culture by our efforts, but we can change ourselves a little. In the Eastern Christian world, this comes close to defining what salvation really is—to bring Christ into our lives to such an extent that our lives are saved from the artificiality of this temporary age.

The efforts of self-control for fasting, generosity in giving to the poor, taking the time for prayer and serving others: all these things may not change our world much, but they do make a contribution in that direction and certainly change us. The spoiled, self-indulged heart inside us can become the heart that loves others, loves service and loves self-control. Make no mistake, Christ is brought into our world just a little bit more through these efforts.

Thomas and Judith Snowdon, of Saint-Joseph-De-Kent, New Brunswick, concluded their term as MCC representatives in Egypt on Nov. 30, 2013.

My eclectic Anabaptist wardrobe

How the author's journey has been shaped by different Anabaptist communities

by Brian Miller

In his book *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials of a Radical Faith* (Herald Press, 2010), Stuart Murray writes as one who has been drawn to the Anabaptist tradition from the post-Christendom British context. He explores both the historical dimensions of the movement and core convictions that have developed as contemporary followers of Jesus in the United Kingdom engage with this tradition. Whether or not you identify yourself as an Anabaptist, it's a good read. It's a good read for anyone committed to worshiping and following Jesus.

Murray identifies four kinds of Anabaptist communities today. Reading *The Naked Anabaptist* has prompted me to reflect again on the many ways my story has been shaped by multiple communities expressing the Anabaptist vision in different ways. Here are some reflections on how I have been shaped by each of the types of contemporary Anabaptist communities named by Murray.

The descendants of the early Anabaptists: the Mennonites, Amish and Hutterites (Type 1)

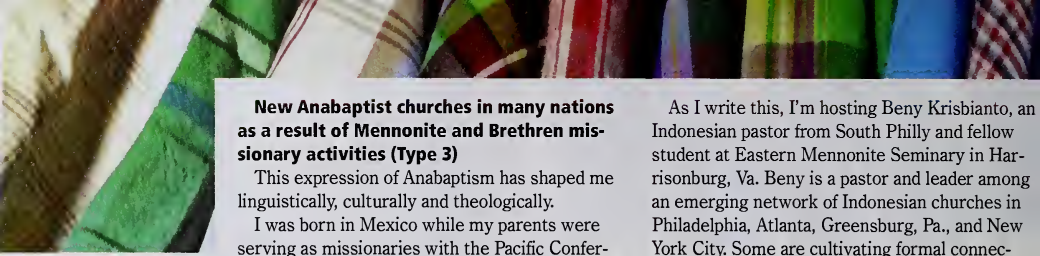
This first type of Anabaptist community represents the rock from which I was hewn. Biology and genealogy tell me I am from Swiss-German descent—from Miller and Ehst, Snyder, Souder and Moyer. On my father's side the lineage goes back to Swiss Brethren via Jakob Ammann's branch. They first landed in Holmes County, Ohio, before the pioneer spirit took them out west to the Willamette Valley in Oregon.

My maternal roots are in the Franconia Conference—in the soil deeded to Mennonite immigrants by William Penn. The Bally farm passed down over eight generations is a testament to the values of faith and hard work that served Mennonites well as they established spiritually, culturally and economically flourishing communities in a new setting. While I was connected to this community through family ties, we lived at a distance for most of my childhood. This changed in my senior year of high school, when I moved back to Pennsylvania to attend Christopher Dock Mennonite High School in Lansdale.

I married into a Midwestern expression of this kind of Anabaptist community. My wife's mother was from the Kansas Mennonites, who emigrated from Prussia. Because of this, I have relational ties to places such as Hillsboro, Newton and Hesston. We have old photos of Unruh and Bartel family on our mantel. We make and eat peppernuts during the Christmas season. Because of this connection, we know what it is to eat zwieback and verenika.

While my genealogy qualifies me to be a cradle Mennonite, I have not always felt at home in these highly embedded communities. Having lived other places outside traditional Mennonite enclaves, I was not always sure I fit in, even though I had the right last name and could play the Mennonite game with the best of them. This likely has much to do with the fact that my earliest memories are as a part of Murray's third type of Anabaptist community.

While my genealogy qualifies me to be a cradle Mennonite, I have not always felt at home in these highly embedded communities.



New Anabaptist churches in many nations as a result of Mennonite and Brethren missionary activities (Type 3)

This expression of Anabaptism has shaped me linguistically, culturally and theologically.

I was born in Mexico while my parents were serving as missionaries with the Pacific Conference of the Mennonite Church. This is the earliest place I remember being from. Before I knew about shoofly pie, I knew about tamales. The Anabaptists in northwest Mexico did not associate their faith story with the European origins of Anabaptism. In fact, the most common way they self-identified was as evangelicos.

The only visible sign of Anabaptism might have been the prayer veil worn by the women converts to this movement. Their brown, sun-baked skin and black hair told another story—a mestizo story. It was a story of hard work and struggle. Their worn huarache sandals and swept dirt floors had more to do with the struggle of subsistence campo life than an Anabaptist conviction about simplicity.

These expressions of gospel meeting culture flavored with an Anabaptist telling of the story continue to emerge as movements with their own unique gifts to bring to the table.

Yet theirs was an authentic faith. Personal testimonies provided an ongoing narrative theology within which the community bore witness to their experience with God. An experience that had to do with transformed living made possible through a personal encounter with Jesus. The community gathered for vibrant worship with guitars and hand clapping.

My experience as a participant in Youth Evangelism Service and later as an administrator for Latin America with Discipleship Ministries confirms Murray's observation that each of these communities interprets the Anabaptist tradition in its own way. I have seen these diverse interpretations in Puebla, San Pedro Carcha, Cusco and Tegucigalpa. These expressions of gospel meeting culture flavored with an Anabaptist telling of the story continue to emerge as movements with their own unique gifts to bring to the table.

As I write this, I'm hosting Beny Krisbianto, an Indonesian pastor from South Philly and fellow student at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va. Beny is a pastor and leader among an emerging network of Indonesian churches in Philadelphia, Atlanta, Greensburg, Pa., and New York City. Some are cultivating formal connections with Franconia Mennonite Conference. Are these churches Mennonite? Are they Anabaptist? Perhaps that remains to be seen.

These same questions and observations could apply to Sunnyside Mennonite Church, the congregation where I serve as pastor, and Lancaster Mennonite Conference, the fellowship of churches we are a part of. What is evident is that many are coming to the table in the kingdom.

Other denominations that began later but drew inspiration from Anabaptism: various Brethren groups, the Bruderhof movement and some Baptists (Type 2)

Upon returning from the mission field, my family lived in Tulsa, Okla., for seven years. During these years of living in the Bible Belt, my theological wardrobe was influenced by other streams—some that could be situated in this second category of Anabaptism.

We moved from Mexico to Tulsa so my father could take a teaching position at Oral Roberts University. While ORU does not represent this second category of Anabaptism that Murray identifies (imagine a Bruderhof community with a Prayer Tower or City of Faith), we did attend Parkside Mennonite Brethren Church during these years. It was here I learned about potluck meals, singing hymns and church as community. Little did I know at that time that the last names—Pankratz, Unruh, Balzer, Harms, Ratzlaff, Wolgemuth—represented a different entry point into the Anabaptist story from Miller. Nevertheless, the theological garb was familiar, if at a subconscious level.

During these years in Oklahoma I had the opportunity to hear John Wimber speak. Wimber's story was formative for me. A hippie musician who played with the Righteous Brothers, he eventually had a profound encounter with Jesus and became a founding leader of the Vineyard Movement—a movement that attempted to espouse a third way between Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism. The "empowered evangelicalism" garb was influenced by the social consciousness of Wimber's Quaker roots and the kingdom theology of George Ladd.

This movement, while less overtly Anabaptist,

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TOMS Shoe-giver moved by faces of Peru

Stephanie Jankov won't soon forget the faces she saw in Peru the week of Sept. 9.

They were the faces of many of the 1,802 children—from toddlers to teenagers, in daycare and schools—who received new shoes from a group, including Jankov, on a "giving trip" for TOMS Shoes. For every purchased pair of its shoes, the Santa Monica, Calif.-based company gives one free pair to a needy child in nearly 60 counties worldwide.

Some of the Peruvian children were talkative, while others were shy, but all were "beaming," said Jankov, a 2010 Bluffton University graduate who won the trip as one of the top 50 vote-getters in an online TOMS contest last spring.

She particularly remembered one boy, about 12 years old, who, after his fitting, "took off running because he was so excited." Children get shoes every six months after their first pair, so new recipients' shoe sizes are written on their hands to show volunteers who record the sizes. When the boy was reminded to do that, he turned around with "the biggest grin you've ever seen," she added.

"Their faces totally made the trip," said Jankov, noting that she saw children with laces tied tightly around black and blue ankles to keep their previous, ill-fitting shoes from falling off.

The Shelby (Ohio) High School English teacher was among 12 contest winners in her group, one of five contest-related contingents distributing shoes in Central and South America this year. Her companions also included a trip leader, an interpreter and three TOMS employees.

Photo provided by TOMS Shoes

Stephanie Jankov (foreground) helps a boy try on a new pair of shoes in Pachacutec, Peru, during her TOMS Shoes "giving trip" to the South American nation the week of Sept. 9.

Their travels began with a roughly 12-hour journey to Peru, followed by a Sept. 8 tour of the capital city of Lima, where Jankov was surprised by some of the sights. "I just didn't expect so many places to be run down or abandoned," she said, acknowledging that she didn't expect the level of poverty she saw in the city.

After four nights in Lima, the group went south along the Pacific coast to the city of Chincha Alta and then further south to Ica, before heading back north for a day in Pisco. At some of their school stops along the way, the travelers spent time playing with children, whom she called "absolutely wonderful."

Jankov, a Mansfield, Ohio, resident, also enjoyed meeting women who work as volunteers for Coprodeli, an organization that serves as one of TOMS' "giving partners"—locals who assist with the logistics of distribution. Coprodeli also provides services such as education, housing and health care for poor families near Lima.

The volunteers—mothers, grandmothers and women who "just want to make a difference"—handle the documentation that accompanies shoe distribution, Jankov explained.

Continued on page 2

Shoe-giver *from page 1*

"They do what we did (for five days) every single day," she pointed out. She was inspired by that thought, she said, when the group was at a school with 800 children awaiting shoes and she wondered how the job would get done. Some of the women have landed jobs because of their volunteer work, she added, describing them as "awesome women with stories of overcoming hardship."

Having read with her freshman English students about people who generally "live without," the Wooster, Ohio, native looked forward to sharing her stories of seeing it firsthand and how the trip changed her. "It made me think of my students and how I wanted them to see it," she said about the "emotional" experience.

She's starting a blogging project as a way to tell the stories—to the students, the entire school and the communities that motivated and supported her participation in the TOMS contest.

The company is making short videos on each of the contest winners. Jankov's video can be seen online at http://ow.ly/resqb.

"They treated us like we were part of their family," she said, noting that she was told to keep in touch. The 50 winners will be "spokespeople for TOMS for the rest of our lives," she continued. "We'll always advocate for them."

The 12 contest winners in Jankov's group are taking their advocacy a step further—they decided to jointly sponsor a child to attend one of the Coprodeli-run schools.

As with TOMS, she said, "it's about the human connections."

An early Thanksgiving

Preparing food for Thanksgiving dinners distributed at the Bluffton Food Pantry on Nov. 16 were (right to left) Ashley Shands, a senior from Cincinnati, Ohio; Rachel Snyder, a senior from Akron, N.Y.; and Kaitlyn Leopold, a junior from Ottawa, Ohio. They were among 14 students in a Food Service Systems Management class that provided 55 such dinners. Taught by Jeanna Haggard, an assistant professor of food and nutrition, class members performed various food management roles for the take-out meal project. They secured donations, for example, from Community Market in Bluffton and Lakeview Farms in Delphos, Ohio, as well as from an anonymous donor. They also collected cash donations from community members at a September farmers market in Bluffton.

Meeting at MEDA

Joining longtime Bluffton trustee and alumnus Al Yoder and his wife, Marie, at the Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) conference in Wichita, Kan., were Bluffton students (left to right) Carly Unruh, a junior from Wayland, Iowa; Jacey Dehogues, a sophomore from Kalona, Iowa; Brandi Dominique, a senior from Wauseon, Ohio; and Alexia Fox, a junior from Berne, Ind. They were among eight students from Bluffton who learned more about MEDA, including its global impact, at the November conference.

Gospel Choir voices blend with sister school

Mallory Eicher, a Bluffton University junior from Berne, Ind., reflects on her October trip with the Bluffton Gospel Choir to Hesston, Kan.

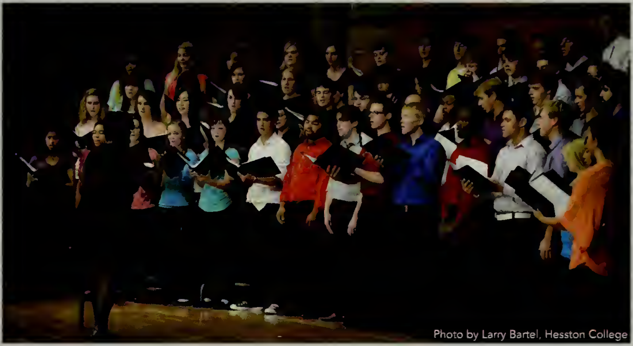

Photo by Larry Bartel, Hesston College

Dr. Crystal Sellers Battle, director of the Bluffton University Gospel Choir, directs the choir and Hesston (Kan.) College's Bel Canto Singers and Chorale in a combined performance during "A Celebration of Gospel: Music and Worship in the African-American Tradition" Oct. 27 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

The first time I was in a choir was in fourth grade. We performed the musical "Annie" in the fall and, soon after, I had a 10-year-old change of heart and quit.

The second time I joined choir was this year, my junior year of college. I was convinced by a friend to try the Bluffton Gospel Choir and was soon convinced by the energy and soul of the music to stay.

In late October, gospel choir members had the opportunity to travel to Kansas to perform at Hesston College as well as at Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton. As a Hesston graduate, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to return for the weekend and reconnect with the community there once more. At our first evening practice, Hesston's two choirs joined ours, and I sat down in my section, Bluffton friends on my right, Hesston friends on my left. From that point on, I had the joy of realizing that I now belonged to not one, but two communities.

Our concert Sunday night was a powerful moment with the audience clapping, singing, and swaying; the voices of people I'd known for two years joined my voice and the voices of those I was just beginning to meet, blending into a perfect harmony.

The Gospel Choir trip allowed me to share part of my Hesston story to Bluffton students and provided countless bus hours (33 to be exact) to grow closer to those with whom I'm only just beginning to form another story.

When we arrived back in Bluffton at 6 a.m., and my alarm clock rang at 7:30 a.m. to go to work and class, I may not have appeared exceptionally joyful, but in my heart were the echoes of those beautiful songs, the laughter from the bus rides and the warmth that comes from connecting with others.

Journey to JERUSALEM 2014-15

Bluffton University alumni and friends can take a "Journey to Jerusalem" in December 2014.

Dr. Randall Keeler, an associate professor of religion and chair of Bluffton's history and religion department, will lead the Jerusalem tour from Dec. 26, 2014-Jan. 7, 2015. Participants will walk where Jesus walked, see historic Old Testament sites and learn more about the current Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

More information about the trip is available online at **www.bluffton.edu/journey**

Heartland
COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC CONFERENCE
CHAMPIONSHIP

Photo by Defiance College Sports Information

Volleyball team wins HCAC, reaches NCAA tournament

Bluffton's volleyball team qualified for the NCAA Division III regional tournament in November with the help of three student-athletes with Mennonite backgrounds.

First-year student Marissa Krier, from Berlin (Ohio) Mennonite Church and a graduate of Central Christian School in Kidron, Ohio, logged considerable playing time as a defensive specialist.

Shelbi Kauffman, from Oak Grove Mennonite in West Liberty, Ohio, was also a first-year defensive specialist, while Ashley Litwiller, a junior from Hopedale (Ill.) Mennonite, was a middle hitter.

Seeded sixth for the Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference tournament, Bluffton defeated three higher-seeded teams to win the championship and advance to the NCAA tournament for the second time in five years. A first-round regional loss to nationally ranked Wittenberg University ended the Beavers' season on Nov. 14.

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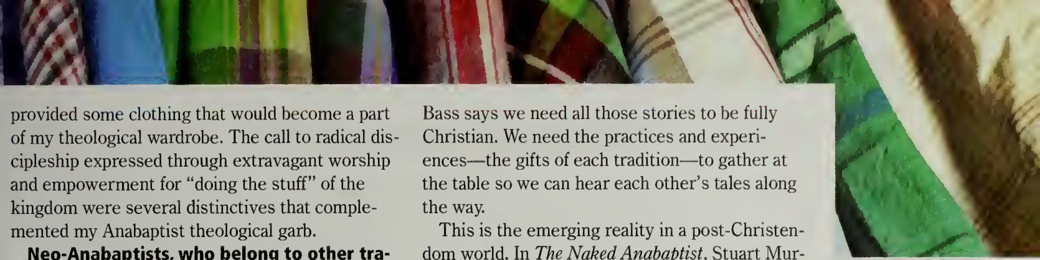
Mennonite Education Agency
The education agency of Mennonite Church USA



provided some clothing that would become a part of my theological wardrobe. The call to radical discipleship expressed through extravagant worship and empowerment for "doing the stuff" of the kingdom were several distinctives that complemented my Anabaptist theological garb.

Neo-Anabaptists, who belong to other traditions but acknowledge the formative influence of Anabaptism (Type 4)

It wasn't until my 30s that I rediscovered the gifts contained within Anabaptism. It was as I engaged with other traditions that converged with Anabaptist theology that I began to find my own story within this many-layered tradition.

Conversations with emerging Christianity as well as Eastern Orthodoxy have provided many rich opportunities to re-examine the Anabaptist way of telling and living the Jesus story. While Orthodoxy does not represent a neo-Anabaptist movement, there are important areas of theological overlap—including salvation as a journey of discipleship within the community of faith.

Several years ago, I had the opportunity to visit Vineyard Central in Cincinnati, Ohio. I had learned about this community through an article that compared it to the Church of the Savior in Washington, D.C. I was drawn to visit and see for myself what this urban, neo-monastic community of house churches was like.

Conversations that weekend provided clear evidence of a community that was drawing from a variety of streams, including Anabaptism. Reading materials included books by John Howard Yoder and John of the Cross. Spirituality combined inward and outward movement. Hospitality and incarnational presence in an urban neighborhood were as much a part of the communal life as were the contemplative practices of prayer and silence.

It was among this community that I learned to appreciate good ale and the grace of submitting to a communal rule of prayer, using *The Divine Hours*. This community has continued to stimulate vision for what it means to live into a missional vision for church. It was among this community that I discovered a way of receiving the gifts contained both within the Anabaptist tradition and the broader Christian story.

I am a part of many relationships that increasingly bear witness to the possibility that we are in a time of upheaval and profound transformation in the church and in the world. Old boundaries no longer apply. Many stories are coming together at one grand storytelling table in the kingdom of God. In *One Body, Many Stories*, Diana Butler Bass says we need all those stories to be fully Christian. We need the practices and experiences—the gifts of each tradition—to gather at the table so we can hear each other's tales along the way.

This is the emerging reality in a post-Christendom world. In *The Naked Anabaptist*, Stuart Murray brings the Anabaptist tradition with its many interpretations to the story table. He offers a vision for Anabaptism that moves us beyond cultural time warps and separatist tendencies.

I am grateful for the way Murray brings the Anabaptist tradition to the storytelling table. He brings the story to life with refreshing humility—naming strengths and weaknesses. His way of telling the story acknowledges the multiplicity of interpretations and ways the vision is being lived. Murray's way of telling the story makes room for the authenticity of each of these interpretations while calling us beyond Christendom accommodations of purpose-driven individualism on the one hand and sectarian visions aimed at preserving cultural ghettos on the other. This confessional stance and posture of humility fits our present context, in which we find ourselves gathered at storytelling tables with Catholic, Lutheran and Orthodox Christians. These tables are providing opportunities for confession, healing and renewed possibilities for partnership in mission.

I am a part of many relationships that increasingly bear witness to the possibility that we are in a time of upheaval and profound transformation in the church and in the world.

There is a party taking place even as Christendom structures and narratives are deteriorating. I plan on showing up. I think I will wear something from my eclectic Anabaptist wardrobe.

Brian Miller is pastor of Sunnyside Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa.

Making a difference in the world

Carlos Romero is executive director of Mennonite Education Agency.

Carol Glick—a former leader of the Puerto Rico Mennonite Church, was my teacher, spiritual mentor and friend. As a young person growing up in the Mennonite Church in Puerto Rico, I knew who Carol Glick was before I knew her as a friend. Actually, most people in the Mennonite Church in Puerto Rico knew of her. She faithfully attended conference events, always reminding people of the importance of Mennonite education.

Carol had the heart of a teacher, the spirit of a disciple and the mind of a wise one. Every opportunity was a teachable moment for her. Her loving heart always put others before herself. Many times she made personal sacrifices in order to assist others. Her faith was rooted in the Anabaptist understanding of Scripture and seeing the world. Her faith was one of intellect, heart and practice.

Carol's wisdom, faith and commitment did not emerge in a vacuum but was nourished by the community and shaped by her experiences in Mennonite education. The last time I wrote this column, I said our world desperately needs more leaders who see Jesus as their model for leading. Carol's experience and connection to Mennonite education made her this type of leader.

In the worldwide context, Mennonite Church USA is not very large, and our institutions are small. Some might translate this to mean insignificance and an inability to make a difference. I disagree. Mennonite education has made, makes and will continue to make a difference in the world.

I'm not the only person Carol impacted. She had an impact on many others, some directly and others indirectly, through her long-term role as a Mennonite school administrator. Ultimately, it is not what she did but the people she touched that provide the real story as to why Carol was such an influential person. And she never expected anything in return.

There are many Carols among us. Mennonites and others whose lives were altered by their education experiences, which invited them to put faith into practice and engage the world, are making a difference today.

Mennonites and others whose lives were altered by their education experiences are making a difference today.

Mennonite education alumni are serving throughout the world. Their impact is far reaching as they work in countless areas from peace and social justice in our inner cities to war-torn countries such as Sudan and Liberia; from early relief and development work providing emergency assistance to food sustainability; from medical reform in mental health to general medicine; from teaching in small villages around the world to Mennonite schools in North America to large universities; from small entrepreneur initiatives to large businesses guided by people shaped by the understanding of their vocation in business as a calling. In all these areas, Mennonite education is making a difference in the world.

I hear many stories with a common thread: "My experience with my teachers made such a difference. The faculty helped me grow as a person; they really cared for me as an individual." I have heard endless expressions of gratitude for our institutions providing a context in which difficult and challenging faith questions can be asked, questions that guide individuals as they journey toward an understanding and owning of their faith.

Cultural and technological changes are making it difficult to comprehend the long-term impact these changes will have on our faith and how we should respond. As a parent I have always said I would much rather my children struggle with their faith in the context of my Christian community than out in the world on their own.

Mennonite education is making a difference, not because of our own sense of greatness but because our institutions respond to our desire to be faithful to God's call and our understanding of our responsibility to make the world a better place.

Part of the leadership development taking place in our institutions is the understanding that vocation is much greater than simply the acquisition of knowledge. It is putting into practice what we have learned in the context of a loving God connecting the dots between faith and practice.

We could talk about the 13,932 students being served in Mennonite educational institutions and programs this year, but that is only a small part of the story. The work of Mennonite education has touched many people. The seeds planted through the years are bearing much fruit.

Carol passed away in 2008, but her work and ministry continue in the lives of those she has touched through Mennonite education. When I went to her for guidance in my own life, she reminded me that Christians should not be surprised by what God might call them to do. "When God calls, you simply follow." TM

Let us become a welcoming church

Long ago I made a promise to myself that in the year I turn 80, I would write this opinion. I would express my huge disappointment that my church is no longer able to connect with the gay and lesbian children of close family friends.

Many of these sons and daughters have become active leaders in other churches; many are ordained ministers in other denominations.

And this is my year to write my opinion.

In giving thought to this writing, I have contacted gay and lesbian friends and family with questions like these:

1. Have you given up on Mennonite Church USA becoming a welcoming church? What difference would it make if it became welcoming?

2.Can you describe the church where you now worship? And your participation in this church?

I was surprised at some of the replies and delighted to know that these folks have not completely given up on our church. Let me share what they said.

"I have not given up on Mennonite Church USA. I see it happening in individual churches. I now attend two churches. I have kept my membership with the local Mennonite church, which is now open and affirming. I feel acceptance from the group, many of whom come from non-Mennonite backgrounds. I participate in special music and use my decorating talents for special events."

"This would make a huge difference to me. It may mean that some of my family members would return to the Mennonite church. I have not given up on my church becoming a welcoming church, and I will continue to work toward that end. This means that I will put forth great effort to remain friends with those who disagree with me. I hope this (welcoming) happens in my lifetime, but at my age it may be wishful thinking."

"No, I have not given up on Mennonite Church USA, although the journey has become extremely taxing and tedious. I remain active in our tiny congregation (expelled from conference 25 years ago) and have also become active in a large United Methodist church. They are an incredibly hospitable and warm congregation in which I am fully affirmed and appreciated. I'm so grateful for them. My hope for Mennonite Church USA would be that she follow Jesus in warmly welcoming and including all people, especially those marginalized by the broader society. They have a perspective on life that the church needs to hear."

I used to sit in chapel at Eastern Mennonite College, Harrisonburg, Va., and see the motto overhead: "Thy Word Is Truth." One time a visiting speaker dared to question that overhead banner. He suggested that Mennonites have made an idol of the Bible. What in the world did he mean?

In later years, I figured that he must have meant we stick too close to the letter of the law, and miss the spirit. That makes more sense to me now than it did then.

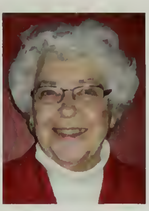
I have had a lot of years to observe our church and our many rules that have shifted with the times. I have heard thoughtful, well-meaning ministers expound on interpretations of biblical passages about long hair, coverings, modesty (meaning long dresses and capes) and divorce. As our church adapts to modern life these thoughtful ministers shifted their emphases. Now I wonder if homosexuality might be one of those issues where we can consider what other Bible-believing Christians are accepting? In other words, can we encourage our theologians to focus on deeper issues for living the Christian life?

Back to my sense of immense loss regarding the gay and lesbian children of close friends and family members and my question to Mennonite Church USA: With all our caring, committed, creative leaders, isn't there a way we could welcome home these members into the fold? Here is one suggestion: Why couldn't individual congregations make their own decisions about being open? Would this not relieve conferences from having to pass judgment on communities of fellow believers who are doing their best to fulfill their own sense of call?

It is my dream (vision) that my church will become not only welcoming but inviting, affirming, blessing and putting to work the faithful members who are a part of the LGBT community. What a difference this would make in the life of the gay/lesbian member—to be included as a fully engaged member of the body of Christ!

And what a difference this would make in my church—showing this kind of love and acceptance of all who want to be a part of this body!

This dream has been forming for a long time. I hope you will accept it in the nonjudgmental spirit I have tried to convey. TM



Elizabeth (Betty) Shenk Brunk attends Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.

With all our caring, committed, creative leaders, isn't there a way we could welcome home these members into the fold?

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Groff named interim editor

She will succeed Thomas, who has served since November 2000.

The board of The Mennonite, Inc., has appointed Anna Groff of Tucson, Ariz., as interim editor for *The Mennonite*—the denominational periodical of Mennonite Church USA—and its related web and social media channels.

Groff, who has served as associate editor of *The Mennonite* since 2006, will begin her new role Feb. 1, working from Tucson. She succeeds Everett J. Thomas of Goshen, Ind., who has served since November 2000 and will conclude his tenure on Jan. 31.

According to Barth Hague of Newton, Kan., chair of both the search committee and The Mennonite, Inc., board, Groff will function as the organization's CEO, overseeing administration, giving leadership to staff and editorial content, maintaining close working relationships with denominational leaders and continuing to guide the transition of the magazine into the digital age.

"Anna brings strong editorial skills and training in management and finances to this role," he says. "She knows Mennonite Church USA well and is energetic in the areas of web and new media. She's the kind of person we need in this role right now."

Hague says that Groff's assignment would be for up to two years—a timeline established by the board prior to the search process—and that she could be a candidate for the permanent position.

Groff has a bachelor's degree in communication/journalism from Goshen College and a master's degree in public administration (nonprofit management) from Arizona State University in Tempe, Ariz.

In addition to her work with *The Mennonite*, since April she has worked as grant director for the White Mountain S.A.F.E. House in Pinetop, Ariz., a domestic violence shelter. She also has served as a board member for the White Mountain S.A.F.E. House and for the Pittsburgh Urban Leadership Service Experience (PULSE).

Groff has established connections across Mennonite Church USA through her work with *The Mennonite* and also from having lived in Lancaster, Pa.; Goshen; Harrisonburg, Va.; Pittsburgh and now Tucson.

She is a member of East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster and attends Shalom Mennonite Fellowship in Tucson. She is married to Brian A. Miller, who is a family doctor with the Indian Health Service and works for the Tohono O'odham Nation in Sells, Ariz.

According to Hague, the board will be looking to Groff's leadership during a transition phase for *The Mennonite*. He said that while the organization's finances are on "pretty solid footing," thanks to Thomas' leadership, *The Mennonite* is facing the same challenge as many other print publications: a continual decline in subscriptions and advertising.

He noted that in the last several years, The Mennonite, Inc., board has taken step to move *The Mennonite* away from being only a print magazine to being a content-distribution system.

"We now have a very successful website and email delivery system," he says, noting that aggregated readership for the magazine, its two e-zines, website and Facebook page has grown to more than 37,000.

"However, the print magazine has been our main cash source to fund these media, and we're seeing a decline in revenue. Most people are used to getting things for free," Hague says "We're still struggling with how to create a viable business model around this scenario. It's kind of a global problem right now, especially for denominational publications."

Groff says she is energized by the uncharted future of print journalism and excited about new digital possibilities for *The Mennonite*.

"I believe that our three media—print, website and e-zines—hold a significant role in the future of Mennonite Church USA and provide important entryways into our denomination for individuals of all generations," she says.

Marty Lehman, director of churchwide operations for Mennonite Church USA and a member of the search committee, says she sees *The Mennonite* as an important ministry within Mennonite Church USA.

"I'm excited to see Anna take on this new role at this time in the life of *The Mennonite*," she says. "We look forward to collaborating with her."

The search committee recommended Groff to the full board on Dec. 3, 2013. The board approved the appointment via email, and the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA subsequently gave approval on Dec. 12, 2013.

Search committee members included Lehman and The Mennonite, Inc., board members Hague; Steve Edwards, Goshen, Ind.; Shé Hall, Hampton, Va.; Gerald Mast, Bluffton Ohio; and Sheri Wenger, Lancaster, Pa.—*Annette Brill Bergstresser of Mennonite Church USA*

$70,000 needed by June for Hispanic program

Benefit events celebrate 25th anniversary of Instituto Bíblico Anabautista

Two benefit events were held last fall to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Instituto Bíblico Anabautista. IBA, translated as the Anabaptist Biblical Institute, is a program of the Hispanic Pastoral and Leadership Education (HPLE) office.

The events were held in Elkhart, Ind., on Oct. 17, 2013, and in Newton, Kan. on Nov. 22, 2013. The events had 110 attendees, with a total of $8,600 being raised for IBA and HPLE. The goal was to raise $35,000 by Dec. 31, 2013, and $70,000 by June 30.

In a Dec. 2, 2013, release, the Mennonite Education Agency said HPLE still needed to raise $10,000 by the end of the 2013 calendar year, and if this amount was not raised, cuts would have to be made to the program.

IBA is helping shape and transform Hispanic Mennonite church leaders. Twenty-five years ago, IBA began with the vision of providing Anabaptist-based Bible studies to Hispanic individuals new to the Mennonite church.

The training is unique in many ways—a few of which are its being Spanish language based, culturally relevant and providing an opportunity to learn while remaining involved in the local church.

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While student participation and interest in this program remains strong, the program is facing financial challenges.

The dinners were held for the dual purposes of celebrating the successes of this program and raising the monies needed to ensure its successful continuation.

IBA was being missional from the start, as lives have been transformed and leaders grown in a very natural and simple way.—Gilberto Flores

Dinner attendees listened to J. Nelson Kraybill and Rafael Barahona at the Elkhart event.

Guest speakers for the Newton, Kan., event included Marco Güete, the first IBA director, and Gilberto Flores, the second director.

Güete saw the importance of offering Anabaptist-biblical studies at the Spanish level that would be accessible to the growing number of Hispanic Mennonites, often immigrants with grade-school educations.

"Because of high respect for leadership in Hispanic congregations, the level of education of pastors and leaders becomes the determining ability for the congregations to thrive," said Güete. "So IBA was created to raise leadership capacity among Hispanic congregations."

Graduates of the program have gone on to fill a number of leadership positions across the broader church.

Flores continued to grow the program under the Hispanic Ministries office of the General Conference Mennonite Church and shepherded IBA through the denominational transition that created Mennonite Church USA.

"There was a lot of emphasis on becoming a missional church," said Flores, "IBA was being missional from the start, as lives have been transformed and leaders grown in a very natural and simple way. God has been present in all of this."

"There was great support in Newton, where people are familiar with the beginnings of the program, and growing support in Elkhart," says Ken Gingerich, MEA development associate. "Now we need to expand that support across the church to folks who are becoming acquainted with IBA and are enthused about supporting the program."—*Krista Allen of Mennonite Education Agency*

Gathering on LGBT issues in Lancaster, Pa.

Welcoming Dialogue Group planned for 100, but almost 200 registered.

Janet Stoner

Megan Ramer gives her presentation at the Eden Resort in Lancaster, Pa., on Nov. 17, 2013.

"Fashioned in Love: Biblical and Theological Foundations for Inclusion" is the title of a paper written by Megan Ramer in 2011. It provided the theme for a fund-raising dinner meeting of almost 200 people held in Lancaster, Pa., on Nov. 17, 2013.

The Welcoming Dialogue Group (WDG) of Lancaster initiated the event, and the Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Interests cosponsored it. Megan Ramer, pastor of Chicago Community Mennonite Church, was the featured speaker. WDG's focus is to help Mennonite congregations become welcoming or more welcoming of LGBT people. Its members come from five different Mennonite Church USA congregations in the Lancaster area. WDG members and friends purchased dinner tables for the event and invited interested people from various congregations and denominations to attend.

"Our goal was 100 participants, and 197 people registered and came to hear Megan Ramer tell her story of pastoring in a congregation that is open and inclusive to people in the LGBT community," says Bob Wyble, chair of the WDG.

Attendees came from 14 different Mennonite congregations in the Lancaster area, representing both Atlantic Coast and Lancaster Mennonite conferences. Additional attendees came from United Methodist, American Baptist, Brethren in Christ and United Church of Christ congregations.

Ramer shared her own journey, which began as a college student in a Bible/religion major, where she learned about the church's conversations on human sexuality. Biblical study, prayer and conversations in that setting were keys to developing her perspective on human sexuality.

Later she learned to know LGBT individuals and eventually became fully welcoming of them as members of her congregation. She also shared her congregation's journey toward inclusion, which began in the early 1980s, when a member, the congregational chair, revealed his "double life" as a married gay man just months before he died of AIDS.

She shared that biblical scholarship and interpretation of "the texts" used to denounce same-sex orientation are as invalid for our understanding of same-sex attraction and mutual love today as are the biblical texts used to support slavery, exclusion of women from ministry, and divorce and remarriage.

She also shared a strong wish for us as Jesus' followers to move through and beyond the current impasse so that we as a redeemed community of gay and straight alike can get on with the work Jesus called us to do. Our world desperately needs us to bring good news to the poor, clothe the naked, feed the hungry, visit those in prison and welcome the stranger, as we are Christ's hands and feet in the world, she said. Ramer said: "Spirit so clearly bears good fruit in the lives of those who identify as gay. Who are we to block, deny or limit the Spirit's work?"—*Jay W. and Ruth E.H. Martin*

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EMU to begin listening process

Purpose to review hiring policies with respect to same-sex relationships

Loren Swartzendruber, president of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., will oversee a listening process regarding hiring policies.

In its regularly scheduled meeting Nov. 15-16, 2013, the Eastern Mennonite University board of trustees heard the interest by some faculty, staff, administrators and students for the enlargement of "safe space" for respectful, honest conversations on campus about nonmajority sexual orientation and its implication for access to employment at EMU in Harrisonburg, Va.

In action taken during an executive session on Nov. 16, 2013, the board authorized president Loren Swartzendruber and his cabinet "to design and oversee a six-month listening process [beginning this month] with EMU's multiple constituencies."

The recommendation issued by the board said, "The purpose of the listening process is to review current hiring policies and practices with respect to individuals in same-sex relationships."

"As a Christian university it is our responsibility to engage in community discussion and discernment over issues that Mennonite congregations—indeed almost all denominations in the United States today—are wrestling with," Swartzendruber told faculty and staff during a 90-minute "University Forum" on the morning of Nov. 18, 2013.

He noted that the board made this recommendation unanimously and stressed that the outcome of the "listening process" cannot be predicted in advance of holding it.

In its official statement, the board "reaffirms EMU's relationship with Mennonite Church USA and its practice of biblical discernment in community."

It also reaffirmed "EMU's Academic Freedom policy," which upholds the right of staff, faculty and administrators "to articulate their personal beliefs and values."

Swartzendruber said he would draw on university resources to help him organize a listening process that will encourage all views and voices to be shared widely, with attention "given to relationships and prayer throughout the process."

Citing the thoughts of one board member, Swartzendruber said, "Unilateral decision-making leads to broken relationships and rogue actions. Collaborative decision-making means that a community is functioning well. This board's decision and this process will, I think, show how well our community functions. God is giving us the opportunity to model respect for each other, honesty and integrity."

The listening process is expected to wrap up in time for a report to be delivered to the board of trustees during its June meeting.

In his Nov. 18, 2013, remarks to faculty and staff, Swartzendruber recalled accepting a call in 1978 to be the pastor of a Mennonite congregation in eastern Pennsylvania.

He was 28 years old, fresh from Eastern Mennonite Seminary.

Upon arriving, he found a letter on his desk from a gay member, who was now living in an urban area but who welcomed Swartzendruber to the church.

In his pastoral role, Swartzendruber recalled trying to help this gay man and his parents have a healthy familial relationship but feeling unprepared for this role from his seminary training in that era. Swartzendruber offered this example in support of "the reality" that discussions within the broader Mennonite church on nonmajority sexual orientations have been occurring for decades, including in such publications as *Mennonite World Review* and *The Mennonite* and in Mennonite Church USA forums such as delegate sessions and district conference meetings.

> Unilateral decision-making leads to broken relationships and rogue actions. Collaborative decision-making means that a community is functioning well.—Loren Swartzendruber

"One responsibility of leadership is to help define reality," said Swartzendruber.—*Bonnie Price Lofton of Eastern Mennonite University*

MennoMedia to include statement in Yoder books

Responds to Mennonite Church USA discernment group on John Howard Yoder

The board and staff of MennoMedia has issued a statement regarding the continued publication of John Howard Yoder books in light of ongoing discussions of Yoder's long-term sexual harassment and abuse. Earlier in the year, when renewed controversy surfaced, MennoMedia staff and board discussed issuing a statement but decided to wait until denominational leaders of Mennonite Church USA had a discernment group in place.

"Some have asked that we cease publication of his books entirely; others have suggested that we simply go on as before and say nothing," says Russ Eanes, director of MennoMedia. "We are opting to continue to make his work available but are placing a statement from the publisher in the front of all John Howard Yoder books published by Herald Press." Eanes points out that many of Yoder's books are published "print on demand," so they can include the statement in books as they are printed rather than waiting for inventory to deplete and reprint with the statement.

Amy Gingerich, editorial director, says: "Yoder's legacy remains painful and complex. Many have found Anabaptism because of his writings. At the same time, we cannot gloss over his continued abuse of power. By including this statement in our books we are signaling that Herald Press wants to be about reconciliation and healing, not masking abuses o power."

The statement for inclusion in Yoder's books reads: "Joh Howard Yoder (1927–1997) was perhaps the most well-known Mennonite theologian in the 20th century. While his work on Christian ethics helped define Anabaptism to an audience far outside the Mennonite Church, he is also remembered for his long-term sexual harassment and abuse of women. At Herald Press we recognize the complex tension involved in presenting work by someone who called Christians to reconciliation and yet used his position of power to abuse others. We believe that Yoder and those who write about his work deserve to be heard; we also believe reader should know that Yoder engaged in abusive behavior. This book is published with the hope that those studying Yoder's writings will not dismiss the complexity of these issues and will instead wrestle with, evaluate and learn from Yoder's work in the full context of his personal, scholarly and churchly legacy."—*MennoMedia staff*

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from the MennoMedia staff!

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Sister Care seminar presented in all conferences

Largest event with 199 participants took place in Lancaster in November.

The Sister Care seminar in Lancaster, Pa., Nov. 1-2, 2013, with 199 women attending was not only Mennonite Women USA's largest U.S. seminar but also marked a milestone for presenters Carolyn Holderread Heggen, psychotherapist, and Rhoda Keener, MW USA co-director. Over a three-year period, they have presented the seminar in every area conference of Mennonite Church USA.

"I believe this model is significant," Keener says, "because small conferences receive the same input as areas with a much larger Mennonite population. We have gone to Gulf States and North Central Conferences as well as conferences in Kansas and Pennsylvania."

MW USA leveled cost for local Mennonite women hosts by establishing a flat rate to cover travel expenses. A grant from the United Service Foundation also subsidized part of the cost for these 21 conferences.

Since its beginning, 2,700 women have attended Sister Care seminars, with more than 500 participating in international settings.

The international seminars presented in India, Nepal, Guatemala, Mexico and Colombia focused on training local leaders. More are scheduled for Bolivia, Puerto Rico and Trinidad. MW USA has worked collaboratively with Anabaptist Women Theologians Movement of Latin America, the Latin American Anabaptist Seminary in Guatemala City, the Mennonite Biblical Seminary of Colombia, Mennonite Mission Network, United Mission to Nepal, the All India Mennonite Women and Virginia Mennonite Missions.

The Schowalter Foundation, Mennonite Central Committee, the Latin American Committee of the Council of International Anabaptist Ministries and individuals have assisted in funding.

The 64-page Sister Care manual written by Heggen, Keener and MW USA co-director Ruth Lapp Guengerich has been translated and contextualized into Spanish. Plans are underway for a U.S. Sister Care to be led in Spanish by Latina leaders.

Following the first urban seminar in October for women in New York City, Holderread Heggen and Keener met with participants to discuss how African American women could contextualize the seminar.

In July, Keener and Holderread Heggen will present Sister Care at the Native Mennonite Ministries conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba, after which they'll discern with leaders ways Native women can contextualize the material.

Sister Care seminars provide women with tools for ongoing personal healing, recognizing and celebrating God's grace in their lives and responding more confidently and effectively to the needs of others in their families, congregations and communities.

The seminar has four units:

- Claiming our identity as God's beloved,
- Caring for self and others,
- Compassionate listening,
- Transforming loss and grief.

—Mennonite Women USA

Living Love Feast

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BETHANY Theological Seminary

80 students attend all-night missions event

Eastern Mennonite Mission theme: 'called to know God and make him known'

Jessica Mueller

Students play global volleyball as part of Eastern Mennonite Mission's CALLED event for high school students on Nov. 8-9, 2013.

A large global volleyball and an expanded worldview were both in play at the Eastern Mennonite Missions' CALLED event on Nov. 8 and 9, 2013, in Landisville, Pa. About 80 high school students and their leaders from Lancaster (Pa.) County, New York City and the Washington, D.C., area attended an all-night missions event, the first one specifically designed by EMM for high school students.

"The entire event was awesome,"says Jaye Lindo, youth pastor at Capital Christian Fellowship in Lanham, Md. "The speaker was engaging and real; I think the youth were refreshed by his transparency. There were so many takeaways that I know our youth will never forget. And they'll be hand-jiving their friends and yelling the song about the little red wagon for months."

"The overarching theme was for students to realize that they are called to know God and to make him known," says Jimm Derksen, EMM personnel placement coach. "Bob Phillips, an EMM worker in The Netherlands, emphasized the need to listen to others' stories, to share our own stories and then share God's story."

The CALLED event has traditionally been a time of discernment for those considering long-term missions involvement.

"It's been a retreat weekend for people to get away and sense how God is calling them to be involved in missions," Derksen says. "Since this is our eighth year for this event, we decided to change things up and focus on high school students."

During the 9 p.m. to 8 a.m. event at Landisville Mennonite Church, students participated in games, competitions, discussion groups, teaching times and musical worship and learned about short-term mission opportunities. "The lock-in format was well orchestrated, with a great mix of food, fu and fellowship," says DebbiSue Hoover, minister of youth and young adults at Mellinger Mennonite Church, Lancaste "Lots of active engagement, several methods for sharing God's story for students to use later in real life— the event was terrific."—*Eastern Mennonite Missions*

> There were so many takeaways that know our youth will never forget.
> —Jaye Lindo

Ephrata couple honors baby's death

Janae and Rodney Hostetter raise funds for pregnancy center in Uganda.

In early 2010, Janae and Rodney Hostetter of Ephrata, Pa., were thrilled when they found out Janae was pregnant. As they approached their three-month prenatal visit, they could have never imagined the struggle they would face in the coming months.

The three-month ultrasound revealed abnormalities of the brain, a disorder known as anencephaly. The doctor informed them that their child—a girl they named Aliyah Joy—would only survive a couple hours after birth, if at all. Anencephaly is usually fatal, with very few exceptions.

Rodney and Janae knew from the beginning that their desire was for Janae to carry the baby to term. They also committed themselves to constant prayer for Aliyah Joy's life and loving her for as long as she lived, even if it was not outside the womb.

"The final six months of pregnancy carried more sorrows than joys, but God was extremely faithful through it all," Janae and Rodney Hostetter wrote on their website.

Aliyah Joy died during birth on Oct. 25, 2010.

"There's another unanswered prayer, some could say," said Janae on Oct. 25, 2013.

After Aliyah Joy passed away, some people worried for our faith, she says, "but we did not struggle with feeling angry at God or abandoned." To honor Aliyah Joy's life, Janae and Rodney began searching for an organization to support with funds they raised in her honor.

A pregnancy center in Kampala, Uganda, The Comforter's Center, emerged as the organization they felt led to support. They learned about it through the ministry of Janae's aunt and uncle, Steve and Darla Kruse—Konnecting and Multiplying International.

The founder and director of the center is Veronica Nakyewe, who is physically disabled from her mother's attempt to abort her. The center offers education, counseling, pregnancy kits, Bible studies and support for mothers, many considering abortion. Abortion is a common form of birth control in Uganda, says Janae.

After Aliyah Joy's death in 2010, Nakyewe came across an online testimony from Janae and Rodney about Aliyah Joy and decided to name the prayer center within The Comforter's Center, "The Aliyah Joy Prayer Center," even before receiving a donation from the Aliyah Joy Fund.

In 2012, Janae received an email from Nakyewe, informing her that she was visiting the United States and wanted to travel to Lancaster, Pa. She asked if she could visit them that Oct. 24 and 25.

Nakyewe had no idea that Oct. 25 was Aliyah Joy's second birthday, says Janae. They had a cake to celebrate and commemorate her short life.

Photo provided

From left: Janae Hostetter's mother-in-law, Dorothea Hostetter; Janae Hostetter; Veronica Nakyewe; and Janae's mother, Dawnell Yoder, stand on the land for the Aliyah Joy Hostel.

"It felt like the Lord brought her to our doorstep," says Janae.

Janae, Rodney and their families desired to further support the center and are now raising $50,000 for a hostel named The Aliyah Joy House, which is for college students. As of Dec. 4, 2013, they had raised close to $40,000.

Nakyewe is in the process of purchasing the land but lacks the funds to begin building. The hostel will provide long-term sustainable income for the center as well as minister to college women.

From Nov. 17 to 30, 2013, Janae, her mother and Rodney's mother traveled to Uganda for a ceremony for the Aliyah Joy House and to do other volunteer work in the area. Steve and Darla, other relatives and volunteers, also joined the trip.

"We dedicated to the Lord the land where the hostel will be built as we shared meaningful Scripture, took Communion as a team and prayed over the land. Our team also planted two trees on the land in Aliyah's honor," wrote Janae in a Dec. 5, 2013, email.

Janae acknowledges this difficult journey but says God was redemptive. "In going deeper in the Lord … the outcome still affected us, but our faith shielded us," she says.

The Hostetters attend Ephrata Community Church. Janae is a graduate of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va. Rodney is in full-time ministry at Gateway House of Prayer in Ephrata. They have a daughter, Rilynn, who is 18 months, and are expecting another girl in March.
—Anna Groff

India's medical smart cards good for hospitals

Health-care expansion in India benefits rural Mennonite hospitals.

John Lapp

धमतरी क्रिश्चयन अस्पता
स्थापना वर्ष 1910
आपातकालीन चिकित्सा
C.T. SCAN
&
ECG

The entryway to Dhamtari Christian Hospital in India.

As the United States struggles with the rollout of the Affordable Care Act, hospitals in India report positive results since that nation expanded its health-care coverage.

Dr. Sandeep Patonda, current medical superintendent of Dhamtari Christian Hospital, says India's health-care expansion has been good for rural communities the hospital serves. Dr. Kanchan Naik of Sewa Bhawan Hospital, in the village of Jagdeeshpur (also located in the state of Chhattisgarh, and about 100 miles from Dhamtari), reports observing a dramatic increase in patients receiving care. Both hospitals were established by predecessor agencies of Mennonite Mission Network.

"Patients who were harboring their illnesses for a long time can now afford to get themselves treated," Dr. Kanchan says. "They have gotten rid of their long-term stigmas to seeking treatment due to their poverty."

In 2008, India began using smart cards to provide health insurance to 33 million of its poorest households. The program is part of the government's overall effort to provide a national health-care system to India's 60 million underserved people. Citizens in Chhattisgarh receive smart cards valued at up to 30,000 rupees ($500 U.S.) annually per family. They can seek care at any of the nation's 12,000 participating public or private hospitals.

While these cards are issued in Chhattisgarh, coverage follows the cardholder even if they move to other parts of the country; the cards have a fingerprint identification system that contains information such as addresses, and names and photos of the head of household and dependents.

The cards are cashless, and rates per approved medical procedures are fixed. Previously families would often forgo care if they could not come up with the money to pay.

"I personally believe it's a good move by the state to reach out to the needy people," Dr. Sandeep Patonda says. "This has surely brought awareness. Now people have become more health conscious and come forward to get treated."

Though year-to-year statistics were not immediately available, Dr. Patonda says there is anecdotal evidence that the patient load of the 375-bed hospital has increased. He says Dhamtari Christian had registered more than 6,400 inpatients thus far this year. The hospital receives patients from nearly 500 nearby villages.

At Sewa Bhawan, a 50-bed hospital that serves abou 3,000 inpatients annually, there has been a dramatic increas in pregnant women seeking prenatal care, says Dr. Kanchan an ob-gyn doctor by training. Deliveries have increased about 50 percent, she says.

"We don't have the numbers yet, but the maternal mortality rate and infant mortality rate will definitely come down," she says, adding that the hospital's income is up an estimated 40 percent.

However, the increased workload is stretching the staff, says Dr. Kanchan, who with her husband, Dr. Tushar Naik, a surgeon, have been serving at the hospital for 25 years.

"We are falling short of nurses and doctors," she says. "We have one junior doctor apart from the two of us." It becomes very difficult at times to manage. We see more than 100 outpatients a day."

Dhamtari Christian Hospital's income has not increased dramatically, says Dr. Patonda. But more importantly, people are receiving better health care. The hospital today is equipped with many of the latest diagnostic equipment and treatment options. It offers a 24-hour trauma and emergenc room, surgery, an intensive care unit, pathology department pediatric care/vaccination clinic, a pharmacy, dental services and an eye clinic.

Dhamtari Christian Hospital's roots go back to 1910, when a small clinic in Dhamtari was founded by Mennonite Board of Missions. Sewa Bhawan Hospital is a general-treatment facility established in 1928 by workers with the Commission on Overseas Mission.

The hospital is now owned and operated by Emmanuel Hospital Association, an organization started in 1970 to maintain the long-term stability of 13 small Indian mission hospitals.—*Wil LaVeist of Mennonite Mission Network*

Triumph after 16 years of nonviolent protest

Indigenous people of Argentina win legal battle for ancestral land.

Pastors Oscar Villalba, Moqoit, and Maximo Galarza, Toba-Qom, on the El Tabacal land near Saenz Pena, Argentina.

A Sept. 4, 2013, victory in the courts for the indigenous Moqoit of Argentina ends a 16-year legal dispute for the rights to their ancestral land.

"This verdict is important because it means the end of a long fight," says Luis Acosta. Acosta worked for Mennonite Mission Network for 15 years as part of the Mennonite team working with indigenous people from the Chaco region of Argentina. He used his surveying skills to further the efforts of land reclamation. His wife, Monica Acosta, who works as a legal secretary, was also part of the Mennonite team, and helps people navigate the complex legal system.

The land, referred to as El Tabacal, is a 46-hectare—almost 119 acres—parcel of land in the Argentine Chaco that the provincial government sold to a white colonist named José Filipchuk. The Moqoit community had been living off the land with their hunter and gatherer lifestyle since before white settlers arrived on the continent.

Of the 100 hectares this community had lived on for generations, the government gave away nearly half in one sale. This lot is small compared with other lots the government has stolen from indigenous communities since the 1940s. In this productive farming region of the Argentine Chaco, white settlers have benefited mightily from the policies of the provincial government, says Acosta.

The colonizing of indigenous land has caused major disruptions in the Moqoit and other indigenous groups' way of life. In some cases, several families live in one house or on a small bit of land. In other instances, the families that did not have land or could not survive on reduced tracts of land left the community and looked elsewhere for survival.

Oscar Villalba, a leader from the Moqoit community who works hard to win back his people's land, was quoted in a sociological report: "When the families leave, it's very painful because, first of all, we run the risk of losing our culture, our language. When they [our people] go somewhere else, [our culture] starts disappearing."

The community's opportunity in the El Tabacal case was that the provincial government issued Filipchuk a provisional title for the land. This meant Filipchuk could use the land but wouldn't receive a permanent title until after he paid for the land in full through monthly payments.

Since the Argentine government included indigenous rights in their constitution in 1994, Villalba and the community had legal reasons to pressure the provincial government not to issue the final title. The Moqoit community won the case in 2006.

After the verdict, the Moqoit community allowed Filipchuk's farmer to harvest his sunflower crop, but they watched him carefully to ensure he didn't try to cheat them and plant a new crop.

By February 2007, two months after the crop was harvested, the farmer's laborer still lived on the land.

The farmer called the police when Villalba broke the lock to the laborer's house. A visiting communications team from Mennonite Mission Network came by the land and documented the proceedings. The police officers dealt fairly with both sides and stood up for the community by evicting the farmer from the land.

However, in 2011, the court overruled the 2007 verdict due to technicalities related to Filipchuk's widow, Patricia Tichy, and her access to the court proceedings.

"[The judgment] was for political reasons more than legal reasons," says Acosta. "Everything we worked for went to zero."

The community didn't stop trying, and last September, the judge ruled that the government must respect the land of the indigenous community. Tichy will appeal the verdict.

"[She has] a low probability of winning [the case], but there is always danger that politics will defeat justice," says Acosta.

The Acostas have continued to further what they started when they served on the Mennonite team. Their work on the El Tabacal case is typical of the background work they have done for years in support of indigenous rights.

"This verdict is important because it gives a legal precedent for future cases like this one," says Acosta. "This verdict acknowledges the rights of the indigenous people that are recognized in the constitution of the Chaco and the national constitution."—*Sara Alvarez of Mission Network*

Local partnerships guide MCC disaster response

Mennonite Central Committee focusing on smaller communities not yet served

Dan Jantzi

Jeanne Jantzi, right, talks with teachers Janett Yubal, left, and Selvia Luna, center, about their experience with Typhoon Haiyan, which de astated parts of the Philippines in early November 2013. Community members took shelter in the Dalinding village elementary school or the island of Cebu until the winds blew away large swaths of roof.

After Typhoon Haiyan devastated islands of the Philippines in early November 2013, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) turned to people affected by the disaster and organizations with community connections to help guide its response.

The largest international humanitarian responses are focused on the most populated areas, so MCC, as it typically does after a disaster, focused on smaller communities that had not yet been served.

MCC works with partner organizations that have or can establish those community connections.

Soon after the typhoon, MCC partnered with Peacebuilders Community, Inc. (PBCI) to send a team to the city of Ormoc on Leyte island.

They met with local pastors and community leaders to determine the needs in this area and to help them manage their own disaster recovery.

In the first week, MCC also programmed $200,000 for emergency food and household items in partnership with Church World Service (CWS) because the organization has staff in the Philippines who work with village leaders to respond to a disaster.

"The village representatives know their village. They know the households. They know which organizations have promised what," says Estaban (Bong) Masagca, who is doing assessment with CWS.

Working with the input of local leaders results in more efficient, fair and peaceful distribution of supplies than would happen without their knowledge, says Jeanne Jantzi, MCC area director for Southeast Asia along with her husband, Da Jantzi.

The Jantzis are based in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and are from Lowville, N.Y.

The Jantzis lived in Indonesia for 12 years and provided leadership through MCC's response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, gaining expertise through that experience.

They worked with several Indonesian Mennonite synods to develop community-led disaster response plans that have been used during earthquakes, floods, volcano eruptions and other disasters in Indonesia.

"Disasters don't just happen in a vacuum," Jantzi says. "The destruction that we see in the Philippines is layered o top of the local reality. The typhoon-affected area of the Philippines has also been an area with significant conflict for many years. Relief workers need to pay attention to this conflict situation."

Before Typhoon Haiyan, MCC proactively partnered with PBCI in a three-year training program for Peace and Reconciliation teams in disaster risk reduction, including ways to reduce violent conflict.

PBCI is a local Philippines organization with ties to the Integrated Mennonite Church of the Philippines and a ministry of Mennonite Church Canada Witness.

To donate to this effort or to read more about the Jantzis' experiences in conflict and disaster response, go to mcc.org/typhoon.—*Mennonite Central Committee staff*

Visit with Angolan churches inspiring and troubling

Mennonite World Conference delegation has follow-up visit last September.

Photo provided

From left: Janet Plenert, Henk Stenvers, José Ngola (president of IEIMA), Enock Shamapani, Garcia Domingos (president of ICMA). After a recent visit to the Cunene region of southern Angola, Ngola requested prayer for many people affected by drought and famine.

An enthusiastic and joyous welcome and long lists of needs greeted a Mennonite World Conference (MWC) delegation during a visit to member churches in Angola the first week of September 2013—a follow up to an earlier delegation in April.

The purpose, according to Henk Stenvers of the Netherlands, secretary of the deacons commission, was to listen to, encourage and assure church members that they are an important part of the global communion that MWC strives to be. Others in the delegation included Janet Plenert of Canada, vice president of MWC, and Enock Shamapani of Zambia, a member of the deacons commission, who led a seminar on the role of deacons. Others who were slated to join the group—Samuel Martínez Leal from El Salvador and Shant Kunjam from India—were denied visas.

"I was inspired by the members of local churches—the obvious joy they get from their faith and the way they keep going, although they are clearly very poor," says Stenvers. "Inspiring was the story of the Bible school student who gets up every morning at 4 a.m. to sell soap, wash cloths and toothpaste near the bus station to earn money to pay for school."

After meeting some of the church leaders, Plenert says, "we were impressed with the vision of the leaders, the dedication of the teachers and their focus on what they had, much more than on what they didn't have." At the same time, delegation members felt overwhelmed and troubled by some requests for assistance that seemed to assume that the full solution to needs would come from outside the country.

In a worship service early in their visit, delegation members emphasized that they came as brothers and sisters, not as a mother or father to the Angolan churches. Later in the week, says Plenert, "a youth leader publically stated that in spite of what we had preached on Sunday ... we are their mother and father whether we like it or not because Mennonite is (originally) a white European and North American church. He said that [they] know our history and are responsible to teach it to them and provide for them because we brought them this church."

The comment stung, says Plenert. In response, she referred to the church as "a body of many members, not a hierarchy of historic ownership." Referring to her own experience of joining the Mennonite church, although not raised in a Mennonite home, she said, "We are all adopted in, Gentiles who by grace are part of the people of God."

The delegation met with leaders of the same groups visited by the earlier delegation in April 2013. In addition, Stenvers, Plenert and Shamapani also had opportunity to meet with the disaffected leader of the Igreja Evangélica Menonita em Angola and to encourage re-establishment of fellowship with other Mennonite groups.—*Ron Rempel of MWC*

Facing financial challenges

Larry Miller: What is God's call for funding Mennonite Church USA?

Mennonite Church USA asked Everence to review the financial trends in the church and its area conferences. We were glad to be involved in this initiative since it's important to understand our church's financial situation, how it's changing over time and how to focus resources to support our ministries into the future.

Our vision directs us: As with any financial review of an organization, we start with its vision. Contributors to an organization fund its future, so they need to understand its direction and plans. With Mennonite Church USA's "Purposeful Plan," we have a vision to steer us toward where we sense God is leading us.

The Purposeful Plan acknowledges the important link between finances and vision in priority #4: As God's stewards we will reflect God's abundance through our generosity in achieving missional goals across all parts of the church.

Leaders within the church are stewards of the future of the church, its priorities and financial viability. They encourage trust in God's abundance, even in times of scarcity. They nurture generosity among church attenders by clearly communicating and following through on these priorities.

Outside forces: As part of our review, we looked at where people in our congregations could give money in ways that reflect their faith values. Down through the centuries, churches met many social needs that nonprofits increasingly address. The U.S. has experienced significant growth of nonprofits. Most are secular, but many are religious, including those growing out of our denomination and faith tradition.

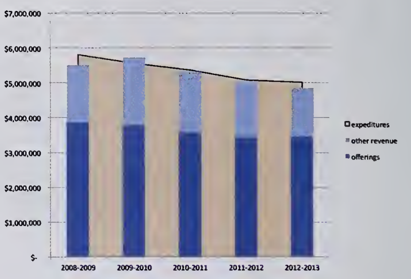
Focusing on faith-based organizations, the chart in the lower left on page 45 shows that people of faith have many places they can give money to today. Congregations also have many possible ministry partners at local and international levels.

Conferences participating in review

Allegheny
Central District
Central Plains
Franconia
Franklin
Gulf States
Indiana/Michigan
Lancaster
Mountain States
Ohio
Pacific Northwest
Pacific Southwest
Virginia
Western District

They represent two-thirds of all Mennonite Church USA and approximately 80 percent of church members.

Participating conferences' income and expenses



Church members may be giving generously in many way but not as much to the church denomination as in the past. We can't take our members for granted. The church addresses this trend by shaping ministries in ways that help members carry out their passions and faith callings within the church community.

Inside forces: All people of faith, regardless of their financial means, can give money to God through their offerings. While this is true, the church can also take a closer look at giving patterns. Out of all the money given to the church, a small group of people gives more than 50 percent of the total. They are often people with the financial means to give more than others.

We acknowledge the church has often had an uncomfortable relationship with wealth. Priest and Author Henri Nouwen said, "Sometimes our concern for the poor may carry with it a prejudice against the rich."

Our church institutions have recognized these givers, approaching them to support their programs. Congregational leaders, who are in close relationship with these givers, ca also approach them about local and churchwide ministries. These givers want to sustain ministries they believe in.

Changes within our church: As the number of nonprofits has grown, the percent of people's income given to the church has fallen (see the chart in the upper right on page 45). We examined financial data from 14 area conferences (see list at left). Since 2008, their income has not kept pace with their expenses, leaving a shortfall within these conferences, mirroring the broader church's trend.

Conferences have been reviewing their programs; some are trimming expenses to better match revenues, and some are dipping into reserves. At the same time, the church continues to focus on the evolving role of conferences, the resources they provide congregations and the capacity they have to meet congregations' needs in the future.

Changes ahead: Circling back to our church's vision for direction, we see two stewardship goals rooted within the Purposeful Plan:

- Enhance our funding program for the national conference with a process that includes input from congregations and area conferences.
- Work with the agencies, congregations and area conferences to connect fund-raising directly to ministry.

These goals encourage us to listen to what people sense God is calling the church to do. Understanding and being responsive to church attenders, congregations and conferences is part of this process. They can help identify which activities are still meaningful and which are not. During a funding discussion at a recent Constituent Leadership Council meeting, one participant noted: Building relationships is key.

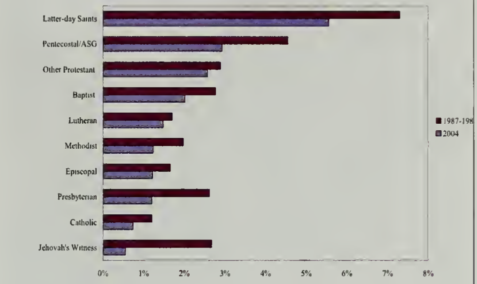
These goals also encourage us to ask: Do people in the pew know and understand what the church is doing? Our ministries should be visible and their outcomes clear. During the Constituency Leaders Council meeting discussion, another person observed that we should answer the essential question: Does the money I am giving make a difference? People will support ministries that are meaningful.

Action steps: To support financial sustainability, we can take the following steps within the next two years:

- All pastors attend at least one educational event on stewardship, charitable giving, end-of-life estate planning, congregational finances or personal finances.

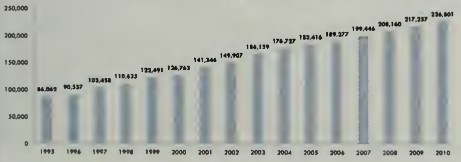
Congregational giving is waning

Religious giving as a percent of income, 1987-89 versus 2004



Religious giving faces increased competition

PUBLIC RELIGIOUS-RELATED CHARITIES



Source: NCCS database by the Urban Institute

Percent increase	163.5%

- Congregations provide at least one teaching session for their members on personal finance and giving.
- Congregations, area conferences and the national conference continue to implement the use of narrative budgets.
- Church leaders provide stewardship training and education for immigrant congregations that address the cultural issues they uniquely experience.

Everence resources: Beryl Jantzi, Everence director of stewardship education, works with the denomination, conferences and congregations to encourage stewardship and generosity. He offers these resources (at www.everence.com/stewardship-education):

- Congregational Stewardship Resource Manual
- Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity
- Ministry and Money
- Year-Round Congregational Stewardship: Six Best Practices.

Yes, Mennonite Church USA is financially sustainable into the future. We achieve sustainability as we take steps to communicate our vision to our faith community and engage them in our ministries. People will support what they believe will bring healing and hope to the world.—*Larry D. Miller is president and CEO of Everence, the Mennonite Church USA financial services agency, which helps individuals, congregations and organizations integrate faith and finances. The charts, created by Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, are published with its permission. This article is adapted from a presentation given to the Constituency Leadership Council last October.*

Top 10 news stories of 2013

The year brought conversations about Yoder, immigration and sexuality.

Anna Groff

One Borderlinks group visits the wall that divides Nogales, Ariz., and Nogales, Mexico, on July 3, during Phoenix 2013.

1. John Howard Yoder's legacy addressed

Last year, many articles and blogs were written on John Howard Yoder's past abusive behaviors toward women. "The accelerating interest in and widespread appreciation for Yoder's theological work has also provoked renewed calls for the Mennonite church, including Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., to revisit unfinished business with his legacy," wrote Sara Wenger Shenk, president of AMBS, in November 2013.

On Aug. 27, 2013, Mennonite Church USA executive director Ervin Stutzman announced that he and Wenger Shenk were forming "a discernment group to guide a process that we hope will contribute to healing for victims of John Howard Yoder's abuse as well as others deeply hurt by his harmful behavior." *(September, page 44, and October, pages 33 and 44)*

2. Convention held in Phoenix with focus on immigration

Mennonite Church USA's biennial convention took place July 1-5, 2013, in Phoenix. The focus of the convention was immigration. Many people traveled into northern Mexico and visited with people deported from the United States. Others visited detention centers and courts where undocumented people were herded in groups before the judge and sentenced. Others learned of the way private detention centers make big money for private investors and the significa economy growing up around an "immigration industrial co plex."

Registration for Phoenix 2013 had about a 30 percent d cline compared with Pittsburgh 2011. Some of the decline was attributable to Iglesia Menonita Hispana deciding in 2011 that it would not participate because of Arizona's dra conian immigration laws. Others sat out to be in solidarity with Hispanic Mennonites vulnerable to Arizona's laws.

Additionally, two Ohio youth groups and their leaders, while attending Phoenix 2013, met with Maricopa County, Ariz., sheriff Joe Arpaio. Afterward, Arpaio's public relatio staff posted five photos of the visit on the sheriff's Faceboo page, showing the smiling group gathered around the sher The photo album quickly went viral, and convention staff began hearing complaints about the group's meeting with Arpaio and the hurt it was causing. On July 5, the pastors o the two congregations offered an apology to moderator Eli abeth Soto Albrecht for the visit. *(August)*

3. Gunden honored for saving Jewish children

On Feb. 27, 2013, Yad Vashem recognized Lois Gunden Clemens, an American Mennonite who helped save Jewish children while in France during the Holocaust, as "Righteous Among the Nations." Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority, was established in 1953. Gunden Clemens served with Mennonite Central Committee in southern France. She will be posthumously honored in a ceremony that will take place in the United States, in which her niece, Mary Jean Gunden, will accept the medal and certificate of honor on her behalf. Gunden Clemens was a 1936 Goshen (Ind.) College graduate and a French professor at the college from 1939-1941 and 1944-1958. (*September, page 12)*

4. Delegates decide on new agency

Mennonite Health Services Alliance and its direct forbears have been a part of the Mennonite family for a long time. During Phoenix 2013, delegates approved endorsing MHS Alliance as a full agency of the church. MHS Alliance became the church's fifth program agency, joining Mennonite Mission Network, MennoMedia (formerly Mennonite Publishing Network and Thirdway Media), Mennonite Educatio Agency and Everence (formerly Mennonite Mutual Aid). *(April, page 34)*

5. 85 new congregations in five years, churches switch membership

In recent years, examinations of Mennonite Church USA demographics have focused on declining membership. But a 2013 list offered a new perspective. A "snapshot" inventory compiled in March 2013 showed 85 new congregations since January 2008. The inventory, which is based on information shared by 17 of 21 area conferences, included new church plants as well as several established congregations that have joined area conferences. It did not include memberships transferred among conferences. Seven congregations dropped membership in their original conferences and joined another Mennonite Church USA conference during this period. *(July, page 32, and September, page 34)*

6. LGBT issues addressed across the church

Mennonites continued to address Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender issues this year. Several events last year include the following: Pink Menno's public demonstration at Phoenix 2013 on July 5 was met with a prayer and response from then-moderator Richard Thomas. On Oct. 26, 2013, more than 130 people signed up for the Western District Conference gathering in Newton, Kan., with the theme "The Church and Homosexuality: A Conversation That Can Hold us Together." The goal of this symposium was that Christians with profound ethical disagreement would engage each other in conversation and theological reflection. On Nov. 17, 2013, in Lancaster, Pa., 199 registered to hear Chicago pastor Megan Ramer share about pastoring in a congregation that is open and inclusive to people in the LGBT community. Finally, on Nov. 18, 2013, Eastern Mennonite University announced plans for a six-month listening process for 2014 regarding same-sex relationships and employment. (*August, December, page 6, and this issue, pages 34-35)*

During a 2013 Sister Care event in Chihuahua, Mexico, participants responded to the questions, "What is the mask that I wear and what do I hide behind it?"

7. Group charts hope for multicultural future

More than 60 racial/ethnic leaders in Mennonite Church USA gathered Jan. 25-27, 2013, in Leesburg, Va., to encourage unity, celebrate the denomination's multicultural progress and begin outlining specific ways to help the entire church thrive as its membership rapidly becomes more diverse. The event, which was open only to members of under-represented racial/ethnic groups, was a follow-up to a Jan. 9-11, 2011, meeting in Tampa, Fla., in which participants freely discussed their experiences in the church. This year's meeting focused mainly on developing concrete ways to move forward the broader church's longtime efforts to embrace racial reconciliation and diversity. *(March, page 32)*

8. Soto Albrecht first Hispanic moderator

Elizabeth Soto Albrecht of Lancaster, Pa., became moderator-elect of Mennonite Church USA at Phoenix 2013. She is the first Hispanic person to serve in this role in Mennonite Church USA. Soto Albrecht succeeds moderator Richard Thomas of Lancaster, Pa. Meanwhile, Patricia Shelly of Newton, Kan., begins a four-year term, serving two years as moderator-elect and chair of the Constituency Leaders Council, followed by two years as moderator and chair of the Executive Board. *(July, page 12)*

9. Editor Everett J. Thomas resigns

Everett J. Thomas submitted his resignation Aug. 1, 2013, as editor of *The Mennonite* and CEO of The Mennonite, Inc. He began serving as editor on Nov. 1, 2000. Thomas will begin working in February as president of the Greencroft Communities Foundation, headquartered in Goshen, Ind., and will join a three-person chaplaincy team at Greencroft Goshen. In December 2013, the board of The Mennonite, Inc., announced the appointment of Anna Groff of Tucson, Ariz., as interim editor. (*September, page 32, and this issue, page 32)*

10. Sister Care expands

The Nov. 1-2, 2013, Sister Care seminar in Lancaster, Pa., with 199 women attending was not only Mennonite Women USA's largest U.S. seminar but also marked a milestone for presenters Carolyn Holderread Heggen, psychotherapist, and Rhoda Keener, MW USA co-director. Over a three-year period, they have presented the seminar in every area conference of Mennonite Church USA. Since its beginning, 2,700 women have attended Sister Care seminars, with more than 500 participating in international settings. The international seminars presented in India, Nepal, Guatemala, Mexico and Colombia focused on training local leaders. *(This issue, page 37)—Compiled by Anna Groff*

WORKERS

Ford, Michael, began as associate pastor of youth at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa., on Nov. 1, 2013.

Lee, Jacob, was ordained as associate pastor at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., on Nov. 3, 2013.

Mentzer, Mark, was installed as lead pastor at Stumptown Mennonite Church, Bird-in-Hand, Pa., on Nov. 3, 2013.

Miller, Lana R., was ordained as Undergraduate Campus Pastor at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., on Oct. 6, 2013.

Wilkins, Donna Peirce, ended a term as interim youth pastor at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa., on Oct. 31, 2013.

OBITUARIES

Bliss, Donna Jean Burkholder, 81, Archbold, Ohio, died Nov. 17, 2013. Spouse: Paul Bliss (deceased). Parents: Maurice and Alma Bachman Burkholder. Children: Doug, Terry, Barbara Kendrick, Sue Short; 11 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 23 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Buckwalter, Royce E., 85, Wellman, Iowa, died Nov. 17, 2013. Spouse: Betty Jean Swartzendruber Buckwalter. Parents: Roy and Ruth Books Buckwalter. Children: Tom, Jane Mauldin, John; six grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 25 at Wellman Mennonite Church.

Denlinger, Annis E., 96, Lititz, Pa., died Nov. 18, 2013. Spouse: J. Clair Denlinger (deceased). Parents: Henry D. and Katie Hershey Eschleman. Child: Judy F. Smoker; two grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 23 at Hershey Mennonite Church, Kinzers, Pa.

Detweiler, Wilmer Benner, 86, Harleysville, Pa., died Nov. 4, 2013. Spouse: Pearl Swartley Detweiler (deceased). Parents: Samuel and Katie Benner Detweiler. Children: Carolyn Hallman, Wilmer Dale, David, Faith Ann Detweiler; seven grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 6 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville.

Glanzer, Shirley Wollman, 77, Freeman, S.D., died Nov. 4, 2013, of heart failure. Spouse: Clarence Glanzer (deceased). Parents: Andy S. and Anna Stahl Wollman. Children: Patricia Falk, Randy, Charles, Brenda Lilliston; four grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 7 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Falb, Esther Beechy, 95, Orrville, Ohio, died Nov. 12, 2013. Spouse: Milton G. Falb (deceased). Parents: John and Ida Hartzler Beechy. Children: Jane Sears, Betty Hochstetler, Dean, Maynard, Don; eight grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 16 at Martins Mennonite Church, Orrville.

Fricke, Lena Molter, 100, Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 21, 2013. Spouse: Edward Fricke (deceased). Parents: Jacob and Annie Swierenga Molter. Children: Leanne Schertz, James Edward; five grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 26 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Hartman, Margaret Irene Shriner, 9 Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 14, 2013. Spouse: Earl W. Hartman (deceased). Parents: Fran and Katie Miller Shriner. Children: Donald Dennis; three grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 17 at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

Jost, Levi Henry, 92, Harrisonburg, Va., died Nov. 22, 2013. Spouse: Evelyn Tice Jost. Parents: Abram R. and Kathryn Willems Jost. Children: Diane Wagner, Annette Holler; four grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 25 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Kerr, Lloyd L., 86, Hatfield, Pa., died Oc 23, 2013. Spouse: Blanche G. Moyer Kerr. Parents: Eugene and Martha Landes Kerr. Children: Douglas, Barry; two grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 27 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

King, Viola Zehr, 95, Ajijic, Mexico, die Sept. 25, 2013. Spouse: Hugh King. Parents: Peter and Katie Zehr King. Children: Janice Kauffman, Gail King; two grandch dren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 16 at Hesston Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan.

Koehn, Irene Hostetler, 81, Hesston, Kan., died Nov. 15, 2013. Spouse: Gilbert Koehn. Parents: Frank and Lizzie Zimmerman Hostetler. Children: Gary, Galen; five grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren. F neral: Nov. 19 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Lengacher, Mabel Miller, 96, Leo, Ind died Nov. 25, 2013. Spouse: Jesse T. Lengacher (deceased). Parents: Eli and Sarah Brenneman Miller. Children: Richar Ron, Rex, Roger, Rosemary Stoner; 10 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. F neral: Nov. 29 at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Luginbuhl, Esther Pauline Shoemaker, 92, Bluffton, Ohio, died Nov. 28, 2013. Spouse: Delbert Luginbuhl (deceased). Children: Diane Bleam, Jane Weaver, Roger, Ron; eight grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 2 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

Martin, Valina, 95, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died Aug. 15, 2013. Parents: Seranus and Blandina Martin. Funeral: Aug. 18 at Floradale Mennonite Church, Floradale, Ontario.

Miller, Louetta M., 89, Archbold, Ohio, died Nov. 4, 2013. Parents: Lloyd J. and Minnie Frey Miller. Funeral: Nov. 15 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Niessen, Allan John, 80, Mountain Lake, Minn., died Dec. 1, 2013. Spouse: Marcia Kay Orton Niessen, Parents: John J. and Anna P. Dick Niessen. Children: John Scott, Bradley Allan; six grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 5 at Alliance Missionary Church, Mountain Lake.

Neufeld, Herb W., 89, Inman, Kan., died Nov. 13, 2013. Spouse: Lilly Ann Regehr Neufeld. Parents: Peter T. and Lena D. Wiens Neufeld. Children: Joyce Price, Jane Esau, Ruth Goertzen; eight grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Nov. 19 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

Rohrer, Gilbert Henry, 97, Harrisonburg, Va., died Nov. 26, 2013. Spouse: Elsie Hertzler Rohrer. Parents: Bert and Laura Ziegler Rohrer. Children: Janis Marleen Kerstetter, Murray Jay, Dennis Gilbert; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Nov. 30 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Schmidt, Ella M. Klassen, 105, Hesston, Kan., died Nov. 15, 2013. Spouse: Ernest J. Schmidt (deceased). Parents: Peter J. and Maria Fehdrau Klassen. Children: Darlene Thiessen, Laura Flaming, Melvin Dean, DeVera Wenger, DuMont; 15 grandchildren; 35 great-grandchildren; 14 great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 22 at Schowalter Villa Chapel, Hesston.

Schwindt, Homer George, 94, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died Oct. 22, 2013. Spouse: Sylvia Schwindt (deceased). Parents: George and Marian Schwindt. Children: Larry; two grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 26 at Floradale Mennonite Church, Floradale, Ontario.

Sieber, Martha Emma Meck, 91, Champaign, Ill., died Nov. 23, 2013. Spouse: Paul Clarence Sieber. Parents: Clarence Clinton and Mabel Viola Resh Meck; 12 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 30 at First Mennonite Church, Urbana, Ill.

Snyder, Dorothy, 83, Waterloo, Ontario, died Nov. 5, 2013. She is survived by her husband Harvey; four children, Carolyn (Tom Arbogast), Valerie (Charles Balik), Tony Snyder and Reginald (Joanne) Snyder and nine grandchildren. Predeceased by her parents Abner & Arminta (nee Honsberger) Brubacher, and a sister Mary Brubacher. Funeral: Nov. 10, 2013, at Waterloo North Mennonite Church, Waterloo.

Stoll, Mary Helmuth, 91, Kalona, Iowa, died Nov. 15, 2013. Spouse: Charles E. Stoll (deceased). Parents: Elmer and Amanda Graber Helmuth. Children: Kenneth, Elsie Mast, Judy Roberts, Frank, Charlotte Lewis, Geneva Humble; 17 grandchildren; 34 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: Nov. 18 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Unruh, Vera C. Matthies, 93, North Newton, Kan., died Nov. 7, 2013. Spouse: Otis D. Unruh. Parents: George W. and Mary Dick Matthies. Children: Wayne, Daryl, Sandy Gauthier; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 12 at First Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.

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Superintendent: **Lake Center Christian School** seeks a superintendent for the 2014-15 school year who is a proven educational and faith leader who demonstrates sound character with a broad knowledge of learning and teaching in a PreK-12 school setting. The successful candidate must be a consensus builder committed to fostering relationships with the overseeing Anabaptist-Mennonite churches, constituent groups and the community in general. Responsibilities: to provide leadership and oversee the operations of the school, work closely with the high school and elementary principals and others on the administrative team. Is accountable to and would work closely with the board of trustees to develop and implement school policies. It is expected that the superintendent would take an active role in fund-raising and development, be a strong spiritual leader, help prepare the annual budget and participate in long-range planning and vision casting for the school. Materials required for submission: Anyone interested should send a cover letter, resume and completed Certified Application by mail to:
Cheryl Sommers, Administrative Assistant
Lake Center Christian School
12893 Kauffman Ave., NW
Hartville, OH 44632.

Iowa Mennonite School is seeking a dynamic, qualified educational leader for the position of ***principal/chief administrator*** in rural Kalona, Iowa, for the 2014-15 school year. All job descriptions and applications may be viewed at the IMS website at: http://www.iowamennonite.org/about/job-opening/.

Johann, the first historical novel published by **Everett J. Thomas**, is available for $8.95 at Amazon.com. Copies may also be ordered from the Better World Books store, Goshen, Ind., at 574-534-1984 or from the Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Historical Society at lmhs.org.

Bluffton University invites applications for the following full-time tenure-track faculty positions to begin fall 2014.
Art: MFA or equivalent in sculpture, ceramics or small metals, pl extensive portfolio of work.
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For position descriptions visit www.bluffton.edu/employment. Review of applications for these positions begins Jan. 15 and conti ues until an appointment is made. Compensation is commensurate with education and experience within the university pay scale. Bluffton University welcomes applications from al academically qualified persons who respect the Anabaptist/Mennonite peace church tradition and endorse Christian higher educ tion in a liberal arts environment. Members of under-represente groups are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Berlin Mennonite Church is seeking a full-time ***pastor of family life***. The position will give leadership to our active children and youth programs, which reach into the community. Berli Mennonite is located in Holmes County, Ohio. Contact the chair o the Search Committee, Ralph King, at rbking70@bright.net, for more information.

Sunnyslope Mennonite Church, a well-established urban co gregation in Phoenix, Ariz., has an immediate opening for a ***lea pastor***. For information, contact Dick Davis at 909-243-5003; email: dickdavis@pacificsouthwest.org.

Lombard Mennonite Church seeks a ***full-time lead pasto*** with a strong commitment to Anabaptist values and theology an skills in preaching, leadership, spirituality, teaching and congregational care. Requirements: M.Div. degree (or equivalent), pastoral experience (prefer urban or suburban setting) and demonstrated experience in managing church staff. International experience a plus. LMC is a member of the Illinois Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA. We are a vibrant Anabaptist congregatio in the western suburbs of Chicago whose members come from diverse Christian backgrounds. Position open Aug. 1, 2014. Interested persons should contact the Illinois Conference associate minister, Roland Kuhl at rgkuhl@mennonite.net.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read ***Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality*** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

RESOURCES

iGods: How Technology Shapes Our Spiritual and Social Lives by Craig Detweiler (Brazos Press, 2013, $17.99) provides needed Christian perspective on navigating today's social media culture, offers a historical look at where we've been and a prophetic look at where we're headed, helping sort out the immediate from the eternal, the digital from the divine.

Holy Luck by Eugene H. Peterson (Eerdmans, 2013, $12) presents three collections of Peterson's poems, most of which have never before been published. These include *Holy Luck* (poems based on the Beatitudes), *The Rustling Grass* (poems about uncovering the kingdom of God in the ordinary) and *Smooth Stones* (occasional poems about discovering the significance in every detail encountered while following Jesus).

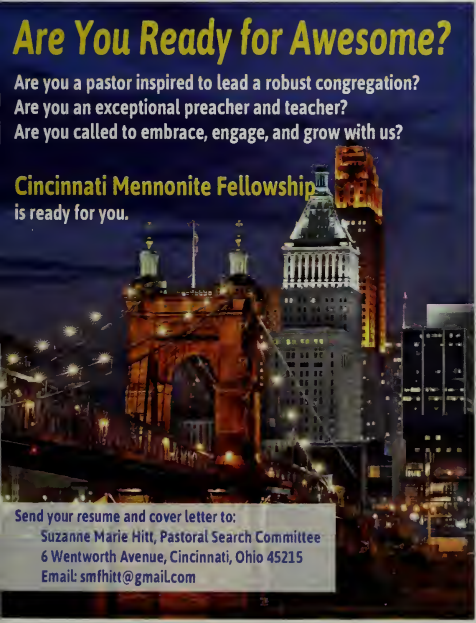
Radical Jesus: A Graphic History of Faith, edited by Paul Buhle, with illustrations by Sabrina Jones, Gary Dumm and Nick Thorkelson (Herald Press, 2013, $24.99), is a social history through comic art of stories from Jesus' time through the Radical Reformation, peacemaking efforts today in Iraq and Colombia and many others.

Discerning God's Will Together: Biblical Interpretation in the Free Church Tradition by Ervin R. Stutzman (Cascadia Publishing House, 2013, $16.95) invites congregations to learn communal forms of biblical interpretation through which to implement practices of discernment offering guidance amid today's challenging ethical and theological riddles.

Songs from an Empty Cage: Poetry, Mystery, Anabaptism and Peace by Jeff Gundy (Cascadia Publishing House, 2013, $23.95) takes on poetry, peace, heresy, martyr stories, music, metaphor and more in this sequel to his award-winning *Walker in the Fog: On Mennonite Writing*. Is a tradition that is at once rebellious, communal, wildly individual and truly peaceable? If we recognize and create it, Gundy insists, the answer is yes.

Amish Quilts: Crafting an American Icon by Janneken Smucker (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, $34.95) explores how quilts have evolved from practical bed linens into contemporary art. The book includes 101 color photos and five black and white photos.

The Early Church on Killing: A Comprehensive Sourcebook on War, Abortion and Capital Punishment, edited by Ronald J. Sider (BakerAcademic, 2012, $27.99), collects writings from many sources "directly relevant to the witness of the early church on killing." The majority of these come from Christian writers before Constantine. Sider also provides brief introductions to every writer cited and explanatory notes on many specific texts.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Classic faith questions for millennials

Peter Epp teaches Mennonite studies in Gretna, Manitoba. He can be reached at p_epp@hotmail.com

For millennials (those born after 1979), there is nothing inevitable about a commitment to church or faith.

It's fascinating how timeless our deepest human doubts are. When asked to share their deepest faith questions, for instance, my high school students generally list some classics:

- Why would we trust that something as confusing as the Bible is "God's Word"?
- How do I know that the religion I was born into is more than just the religion I was born into?
- Is it honest to say I have faith if I'm partly just doing it to please my parents?
- How can I believe in God when horrible things can happen to the good and faithful people I know?

The language may change from student to student and generation to generation, but I've started to wonder if most of our deepest Christian insecurities (or at least our modern/postmodern Christian insecurities) are simply a version of one of these four questions.

But while the questions don't seem to have changed much, I'm increasingly convinced that the answers we give, at least within the Mennonite context, are more important than they've ever been.

For generations, these might have been the questions we wondered about, but they weren't necessarily crucial to our decision to stay committed to our faith. They were simply the things you wrestled with as you maintained your almost-inevitable commitment to the church you were born into. Sometimes the questions were voiced, and often the questions were silenced, but the questions rarely made or broke one's faith.

That is no longer the case. For millennials like me (those born after 1979), there is nothing inevitable about a commitment to church or faith. Ask us why, and you might, among other things, get a version of the above list of faith questions. The tone will range from tentatively inquisitive (more likely when we're still teens) to aggressively assertive (more likely as we get older).

Whatever the tone, we're not giving you the whole reason why. Sure, we're being honest, sincere and vulnerable. But if these are the same types of questions you and your parents wondered about, surely something else is at play here. We just don't see it.

Fortunately, Rodney Stark's book *The Rise of Christianity* explores some of what we don't see when it comes to religious commitment. Among other things, Stark's sociological studies have demonstrated that religious commitments are strongly tied to interpersonal attachments. Stark found, for example, that "conversion ... occurs when, other things being equal, people have or develop stronger attachments to members of th group than they have to nonmembers." In other words, when it comes to religion, people often stay or go based on their personal attachments.

Once it's been stated, it's obvious. Mennonite millennials are more integrated into their broade society than any Mennonite generation before them. They have more friends and connections outside the church than any of their Mennonite ancestors did. And the more you make meaningf connections outside a group, the less you're goi to feel like you need that group to find what's meaningful.

On top of this, Stark's research also demonstrates that once you're torn between two groups—in our case, the Mennonite church and non-Mennonite society—you're going to feel a need to resolve the resulting tensions. You're going to feel like your membership in each grou is compromised by your membership in the othe and you're going to, in Stark's words, "attempt t escape or resolve [that] marginal position."

It's these two "unseens" that make millenn als' classic faith questions more potent. It's also these two "unseens" that make the church's answers so crucial. When these questions were asked in the past, it was usually within some pretty solid Menno-centric group ties. Whether we consciously recognize it or not, when we ask them now, it's because we're deciding if we can stay. We want to know if you have answers that can make sense for us in both groups: the churc and beyond it.

If this all sounds a bit too pessimistic, there's least a silver lining embedded in it. One of the best ways we can build the attachment we need lies right here in these questions that threaten u I won't lie; my generation needs answers that ar resilient. We need answers that make sense beyond our church's doors. So yes, the church has some hard work to do. But luckily, that's just ste two. Step one is to just listen, affirm and connec over the questions we all share. TM

FILM REVIEWS

Philomena (PG-13) follows a world-weary political journalist who picks up the story of a woman's search for her son, who was taken away from her decades earlier after she became pregnant and was forced to live in a convent. This excellent film raises justice issues about Catholic institutions but also explores faith questions in an evenhanded manner.—*Gordon Houser*

Dallas Buyers Club (R) tells the true story of Dallas electrician and hustler Ron Woodroof, who works around the system to help AIDS patients get the medication they need after he is himself diagnosed with the disease in 1985 and given 30 days to live. Homophobic and abrasive, Woodroof ends up helping hundreds with the disease, most of them gay men, in spite of opposition by the FDA. The acting here is extraordinary.—*gh*

BOOK REVIEWS

For God and Country (in that order): Faith and Service for Ordinary Radicals by Logan Mehl-Laituri (Herald Press, 2013, $14.99) tells stories of warriors in the Bible, soldier saints, pacifists and pacific patriots. Mehl-Laituri is a combat veteran who wants to address the hidden loneliness of veterans and how churches have either "been overwriting their lamentable experiences with glory and veneration" or "offered only penetrating and unforgiving silence."—*gh*

The Ox-Herder and the Good Shepherd: Finding Christ on the Buddha's Path by Addison Hodges Hart (Eerdmans, 2013, $15) will be of interest to those looking for connections between Christian faith and Buddhism. But it also offers important spiritual insights. Hart writes that we must learn "how to be who we really are, how to know God as he is in our interior experience, how to relate to the natural world as a revelation and how to mingle in the social world without fear or hypocrisy but with love and empathy."
—*gh*

Video games: danger or opportunity?

Amid the debate over the effects of technology, particularly the Internet, in our lives, perhaps the most negative—and most misunderstood—views relate to video games.

But most of what we think we know about video games is wrong, writes Leigh Alexander in the November/December 2013 issue of *Columbia Journalism Review*. She reviews Nick Yee's new book *The Proteus Paradox: How Online Games and Virtual Worlds Change Us—And How They Don't* (Yale University Press).

She points out how Yee debunks many of the stereotypes most of us have about video games and who plays them. For example, she writes, "only 20 percent of online gamers are teenage boys," and "50 percent of online gamers have full-time jobs, and 36 percent are married."

She quotes Yee about the implications of this broad range of ages among players: "The stereotypical association of video games and teenagers is not only false but hinders our ability to understand how online games can be positive social spaces for younger players."

Yee's research also discounts preconceptions about addiction or antisocial behavior in the players of online games. For example, 70 percent of online gamers play with someone they know in the real world.

Yee comments on our prejudices: "A family sitting together silently in front of the television is deemed socially acceptable, but if they chat and collaborate in a virtual world, this is stereotyped as being antisocial."

Alexander notes other books that defend gaming, including *Reality Is Broken* by Jane McGonigal, which claims that "gamers are actually the world's best problem-solvers."

Yee goes further and argues that online game worlds are not living up to their potential. In spite of this potential, Yee says, games are played by humans, who re-enact their superstitions, gender and race biases and generally imitate reality rather than escape from it.

Alexander writes, "Given infinite possibility, we loyally gravitate to the familiar—nearly every game or online world contains chairs, for example, even though virtual bodies never tire of standing."

Human beings are just more comfortable experiencing humanity with all its limitations. "Even when we believe we are free and empowered, our offline politics and cognitive baggage prevent us from changing," Yee writes.

Alexander calls Yee's book "pleasantly neutral." His book "deftly avoids righteousness and works primarily in the important service of challenging a medium rich with unexplored potential."

Another advocate for gaming from a Christian point of view is Kevin Schut in his book *Of Games and God: A Christian Exploration of Video Games* (Brazos Press, 2013, $16.99).

Schut addresses such topics as how to understand a video game; the interplay of games, religion and spirituality; violence and ethics in games; the peril of addiction; how men and women are portrayed in games; the effect of games on the brain and education; games being developed by Christians; and the social side of gaming.

He calls for a healthy criticism of games and concludes: "Video games can be just as much a part of God's kingdom as anything else, if only we have eyes to see."

While I do not play video games, I believe in the importance of play and creativity. Like many tools, games can be used for good or ill. We should explore the good. TM

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

-wiped out their village or whatever. So I see all my efforts at conservation and creation care as having a global impact on the earth and on the peoples on the earth.

I agree that we should fight toxic dumps next to poor communities. But recycling also creates less to put in those dumps. Parents who pressured Kraft to take out potentially cancer-causing dyes from their popular children's macaroni and cheese product pushed Kraft to take it out for all people who buy it, not just the rich.

I see creation care as a benefit to all and as a part of my mission to all creation on the earth, including all people.—*Linda Eberly Miller, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Thomas to leave *The Mennonite*

It is with mixed feelings that we read of your resignation as editor of *The Mennonite* (September 2013). You have done excellent work with the magazine, whose readership is quite diverse. We believe with you that fulfilling the role of editor is a sacred trust and not to be taken lightly. Thus, while we regret to learn that you have resigned, we wish you God's richest blessings in your responsibility as the president of Greencroft Communities Foundation.—*Paul and Lois King, Sarasota, Fla.*

I wish you well as you step into the leadership role with Greencroft Communities Foundation. You've provided excellent leadership for *The Mennonite* over these last number of years. The emergence of *TMail* was an excellent way of adjusting to current times and getting the message out to the public regarding Mennonite Church USA. Blessings in your new endeavor. —*Warren Tyson, Atlantic Coast Conference/Eastern District Conference executive conference minister*

Wow! You are leaving *The Mennonite*. Well done good and faithful servant. May the Lord lead you on fruitful paths as you go to Greencroft Communities Foundation. A good choice for them, I'm sure.—*Loren Horst, president Virginia Mennonite Missions*

Congratulations. You have done a terrific job for *The Mennonite* and the broader church. Thank you.—*Ed Diller, Cincinnati, Ohio*

I had no idea you were poised to leave *The Mennonite*. You will be sorely missed—from your leadership of churchwide communications to your editorials in *The Mennonite*. It's been a long and impressive run. But congratulations to you. I wish you all the best in taking leadership at Greencroft Communities Foundation.—*Duane Stoltzfus, chair, communications department, Goshen (Ind.) College*

Congratulations on your new role with the Greencroft Communities Foundation. Thanks for your many contributions to the life of the church during these most interesting and tumultuous years, and best wishes as you enter into the last month at *The Mennonite*. —*Loren Swartzendruber, president Eastern Mennonite University*

Congratulations on your new assignment. I've appreciated your leadership and wisdom over the years at the helm of *The Mennonite*. You brought a balanced voice during the merger that was significant in bringing the two denominations onto the same page.—*Jim S. Amstutz, lead pastor, Akron (Pa.) Mennonite Church*

Best wishes in your new role. It sounds interesting and will be significant. Congratulations on 13 good years at *The Mennonite*. I especially liked the part about your concern—and Greencroft's—for the 40 percent of residents living below the federal poverty line.—*Dan Shenk, Goshen, Ind.*

I heard about your upcoming transition. Best to you as you embark on the next stage. Thanks for your many good years of leadership on *The Mennonite*. It was good to work with you. —*Merrill Miller, Broadway, Va.*

I wish you well in your future role and reflect with appreciation on your leadership of *The Mennonite* and on the times we've worked together over th years.—*Paul Schrag, editor/publisher,* Mennonite World Review

I was sad to read of your resignation from *The Mennonite*. I have always enjoyed our interaction at Meetinghous gatherings and have learned a great deal from you over the years. Your encouragement in my early years as editor of *The Recorder* meant a lot to me. wish you God's peace and blessing as you move on to Greencroft Communities Foundation.—*Lil Goertzen, comm nications coordinator, Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference*

It was a surprise to learn of your resignation. But I know this will be a good move for you and the foundation. Every time I update new Associated Church Press board members on our procedures, I recall your leadership in setting up our accounting standards and wrestling our financial reporting practices into the sound system we now have.—*Joe Thoma, executive direc tor, Associated Church Press*

I'm sure this decision must have involved some mixed emotions for you. Congratulations on your outstanding work with *The Mennonite* and thanks again for your many years of dedicate service to the Associated Church Press. You've certainly made your mark and helped us regain some financial breathing space in rather difficult times.—*Meinrad Scherer-Edmunds, executive editor*, U.S Catholic

Editor's note: *I appreciate these and many other kind words since the announcement of my resignation last September. I regret that space does not allo us to print all I have received.—Everett Thomas*

Why I wrote *Jacob's Choice*

In his monthly editorial several years ago, Everett Thomas reflected on the power inherent in a family story ("Story Power," September 2, 2008). The same story that captured his imagination in 2008 has held me in thrall for the last several years. It is the story of our common ancestor, Jacob Hochstetler, who came to this country in 1738.

Hochstetler stands as a hero among Amish and Mennonites because of his nonresistant response to an Indian attack on his home during the French and Indian War in 1757. I first read this story in a family genealogy book and have since heard the story of "The Hochstetler Massacre" repeated many times in various venues. Today's sensitivities, however, beg for a softening of the word "massacre" to "attack." There were indeed many massacres—larger-scale killings that took place throughout the French and Indian War and perpetrated by both whites and native Americans. One of the most egregious was the killing of the peace-loving Conestoga Indians by the Paxton Boys in December 1763.

There's hardly a day that went by in the last two years without my musing on Hochstetler's story of faith. Each day, it transported me back more than 250 years in time to witness the immense clash of empires in Penn's Woods, a conflict that forever altered the social and religious landscape of America.

On some days, I strolled the foothills of the Blue Mountains where Hochstetler and his family carved a homestead out of the rich forest surrounding the Northkill Creek. On other days, I marched with Hochstetler and his captors through hundreds of miles of dense forest. Or I smelled the smoke that rose from the cooking fires at the Seneca village of Buckaloons, where Hochstetler was kept as a captive.

Although Hochstetler's story is well-known among his more knowledgeable descendants, it deserves a much wider telling. It begs to inspire not only those who share his nonresistant convictions but also a broader audience that embraces violence as a way to do God's will. The founding narratives of our nation beg for significant nuancing and reinterpretation. That's what James Juhnke and Carol Hunter hoped to accomplish with *The Missing Peace: The Search for Nonviolent Alternatives in United States History*. I envisioned *Jacob's Choice* as a way to show rather than tell how the Amish eschewed violence in the face of war. The publishers at Herald Press heartily embraced this vision and have done their best to make that possible.

During the surge of interest in Anabaptist origins in the mid-1900s, Mennonite scholars translated dozens of 16th-century Anabaptist texts and wrote extensively about that period. Some wrote historical novels about that era. Most recently, Myron Augsburger wrote *The Fugitive*, the story of Anabaptist reformer Menno Simons. Why so few stories from the 1700s and 1800s? The paucity of historical novels could give the impression that not many faithful Anabaptists lived during that era. *Jacob's Choice* was written to help fill that void. I note that Everett Thomas' 2011 novel, *Johann*, has helped fill the gap as well.

Frankly, I hope to ride the current wave of interest in Amish novels, as explained in *Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance Novels* by Valerie Weaver-Zercher. Like Weaver-Zercher, I live with considerable ambivalence about the portrayal of the Amish in popular media, so I've done my best to write something that tells the story of my Amish forebears with respect and as much accuracy as I could achieve through careful research.

Although I'm enthralled by Hochstetler's story, the narrative in *Jacob's Choice* draws its ultimate meaning from the larger story of God at work in the world. As in the stories of Scripture, the ultimate hero of my book is God, whose visage is made visible to us in the face of Jesus Christ. That story has the power to bring us to our knees in repentance and readiness—like Hochstetler—to make the hard choice to follow Jesus wherever he leads. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

Why so few stories from the 1700s and 1800s? The paucity of historical novels could give the impression that not many faithful Anabaptists lived during that era.

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Farewell

Everett J. Thomas

After 13 years in this role, this marks the last editorial I will write as editor of *The Mennonite*. It has been a sacred trust, and I will be forever grateful for the many readers, friends and colleagues who encouraged and challenged me, lovingly, along the way.

In February, I will begin serving part-time as president of the Greencroft Communities Foundation and join the three-person chaplaincy team at Greencroft Goshen and Greencroft Middlebury. Those retirement communities are in Indiana.

When I came to *The Mennonite* in 2000, Daniel Hertzler, former editor of the *Gospel Herald*, gave me some prescient advice.

“Publishing a denominational magazine,” Hertzler said, “is a cross between betting on the ponies at a horse race and practicing psychiatry without a license.”

How true! I have been repeatedly surprised by a lack of response to articles I expected would generate reaction and surprised by responses to articles that seemed uncontroversial.

Knowing the work and challenges ahead, I am confident this ship is in good hands, even if the sailing will be somewhat rough.

There are also times when a reader’s reaction is so disproportionate to the subject matter that it seems the article touched some deeply painful but unresolved personal issue.

Those surprises will continue as interim editor Anna Groff takes the helm with assistance from associate editor Gordon Houser. Knowing the work and challenges ahead during a two-year interim period, I am confident this ship is in good hands, even if the sailing will be somewhat rough.

Why rough? As Associated Church Press leaders said in a statement last September, “In recent years, reorganization and strategic repositioning in many denominations in North America have le to the demise of a host of venerable denominational magazines, newspapers and news services.”

Such periodicals included *United Methodist Reporter* (May 2013), *The Progressive Christian* (formerly *Zion’s Herald*, January 2013), *Episcopal Lif* (2011), *Disciples World* (2010), *United Church News* (2009) and *The Church Herald* (2009).

Fortunately, *The Mennonite* is in good financial shape, with a solid staff that can take it through the challenges ahead. And they are significant.

Even though more people read what we publish than ever before, the number of readers drawn to our free content online grows as the number of subscribers willing to pay for the print magazine slowly declines. For example, last December our website set a record with nearly 19,000 “absolutely unique visitors,” which is the term Google Analytics uses. We also continue to see an increase in the number of people signing up for our free electronic magazines (e-zines).

No one in denominational magazine publishing has found a long-term solution to this trend. But the future will include digital content in any viabl business plan. To sort out what this will look like, our board of directors decided to work at the issues during an interim period with Anna Groff.

She is the right person for the job (see page 32). She manages our website and is leading the process of building a new one. She edits and publishes the e-zines *TMail* and *Meno Acontecer* as well as the news section in *The Mennonite*.

As I say goodbye, I do so with total confidence in the leadership gifts this young woman brings t the church and ask that you encourage and challenge her—lovingly—as she leads this ministry enterprise in the next years.

Farewell and God bless.—*ejt*

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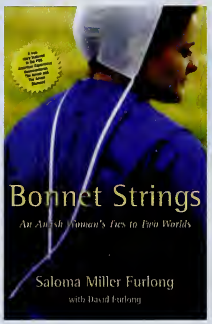


Bonnet Strings

An Amish Woman's Ties to Two Worlds

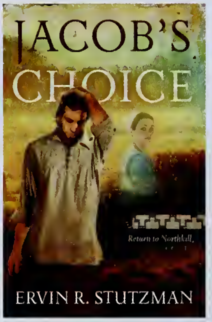
Saloma Miller Furlong

Paper. 978-0-8361-9858-4. $15.99 USD. Released February 3, 2014

At age twenty, Saloma Miller left behind her Amish community in Burton, Ohio, and boarded a night train for Vermont, where she knew no one.

Soon, however, a vanload of people from her community, including the Amish bishop, arriv to take her back into the fold. Will she remain Amish and embrace the sense of belonging and community her Amish life offers, or will she return to the newfound freedom she tasted in Vermont?

Author Saloma Miller Furlong is featured by the *American Experience* documentary series i a new film, "The Amish: Shunned," which airs February 4, 2014.



Jacob's Choice

Return to Northkill Series, Book One

Ervin R. Stutzman

Paper. 978-0-8361-9681-8. $14.99 USD. Released February 08, 2014

Jacob Hochstetler lives peacefully with his Amish family at the foot of the Blue Mountains of Pennsylvania. His beliefs are severely tested one night in September 1757, after a raid on the Amish settlement near Northkill Creek leaves some family members dead and others captured. Will Jacob and his sons ever be reunited? Can Jacob find romance, reconciliation, and happiness amidst the ashes of his former home?

JACOB'S CHOICE
ERVIN R. STUTZMAN

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February 2014 | Volume 17, Number 2

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Other carbon footprinters?

In Ervin's Stutzman's "God sightings at Four Seasons" (November 2013), he expresses his appreciation for the way a business named "Four Seasons" is taking care of the environment seriously. He also expresses surprise to learn that going to the grocery store leaves a bigger carbon footprint on the environment than the production of produce.

If going to the grocery store is leaving a bigger carbon footprint than the production of produce, what about the entertainment world? A great amount of energy is consumed in building places of entertainment. Much energy is spent on traveling to the entertainment events. Why pick on the producer and transporter of produce and food and ignore the other producers of carbon footprints?—*Lloyd W. Gingrich, Mercersburg, Pa.*

No mention of global sister schools

I read with interest the January issue featuring Mennonite Church USA educational institutions. But there was no mention of any sister schools anywhere else in the world, even though you included an article on how cross-cultural experiences benefit our college students and another on how our high schools benefit from having students from other countries.

Mennonite Church USA has five colleges and two seminaries with a total enrollment of over 5,000, while our rapidly growing sister church in Ethiopia, with more than twice the number of members as Mennonite Church USA, can barely afford one co lege, with a capacity enrollment of under 200.

Our institutions have well-finance development departments working year round to raise budgets of million plus having expanding (and expensiv admissions departments competing t recruit students to reach enrollment needs. Ethiopia's Meserete Kristos College has no problem attracting stu dents but struggles to meet its annua operating budget of $325,000, likely less than our Mennonite schools and colleges spend each year for lawn care.—*Harvey Yoder, Harrisonburg, V*

LGBT gathering in Lancaster, Pa.

"Gathering on LGBT issues in Lancaster, Pa." (January) has Megan Ramer calling the church to disregar the biblical texts on same-sex relatio just as we disregard the texts support ing slavery and exclusion of women from ministry. I pray that Megan has not joined the growing chorus of Anabaptists urging Mennonite Church USA not to be "too dependent on the Bible as it decides which behaviors t censure" (Google the quote for context). That is an attitude at polar oppo sites with our *Confession of Faith,* which lifts up Scripture as "the fully r liable and trustworthy standard for Christian faith and life." Our church chose to disregard those passages on slavery and women because Scriptur led us in doing so. There is a clear tra jectory within Scripture toward viewing all people—women and men, slav and free—as valued in Christ. Such movement is gospel or "grace-energized behavior" (Willard Swartley). I know that news reports have to be brief, but it would have been helpful f the church if the writers could have shown us how Megan sees the gospe or New Testament trajectory leading away from sexual mores.—*Harold N. Miller, Broadway. Va.*

I attended the presentation by Megan Ramer in Lancaster, Pa., on Nov. 17, 2013. I agree with Ramer that how we read the Bible is important. Ramer said, Today we don't address slavery by limiting ourselves to the passages in the Bible that name slavery. We figured out that "God doesn't smile on humans owning, buying, trading, selling, using other humans."

In my lifetime we read the Bible to name divorce and remarriage as sin. Today we read the Bible differently, focusing on the heart of God as a loving God, and divorced and remarried people are not only members of our congregations, they hold leadership positions, including lead pastor, in our Mennonite churches.

I also agree with Ramer that the church has a hang-up about sex. Why do we use celibacy as a condition of membership for people in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community. Ramer said, "Just as few straight people ask for pastoral care around their straightness, so few gay people ask for pastoral care around their sexual identity."

When a straight single person goes through the process of applying for church membership, do we require a statement from them that they are celibate? I think not. So why do we make celibacy a condition of membership for a gay person? People in the LGBTQ community have suffered in silence far too long. It's time to get beyond this impasse and welcome them into the church and share the gifts they have to offer. Thank you, Megan, for helping us see more clearly that we need to welcome LGBTQ people to become members of our churches.—*Bob Wyble, Lancaster, Pa.*

The Mountain States Mennonite Conference announced their decision to issue a ministerial license to an openly homosexual pastor (see page 32). I thought it appropriate to let readers know that the sense of God's leadership in this matter has been anything but unanimous. We have struggled with this issue on many levels, but there is no consensus. We have tried to live together, but we find ourselves walking on eggshells. Any decision has the potential to tear apart our denomination, our conference and indeed many of our churches. Let us all continue to pray for God's wisdom. I have personally opposed the leadership board's decision on the following two grounds: First, I do not think the leadership board had the authority to make this decision because it is contrary to our conference bylaws. Second, this action is contrary to God's stated will as revealed in the Bible. I know there are lots of other sins, too—they all bring pain to our Lord. But when confronted with sin, we are called to repent and turn from that sin, not try to rationalize it. We all need to refrain from some tempting activities because it would be sin. How is this different?—*Philip Rosenberger, Farmington, N.M.*

A consistent life ethic

I noticed an ironic juxtaposition in the December 2013 letters that highlights a disturbing inconsistency in the Mennonite commitment to nonviolence. Alongside a letter questioning the publication of an article on the military chaplaincy of a seminary alumni, Donna Neufeld questions the content of a Consistent Life ad that says no to several forms of violence, taking particular issue with "no abortion." It is much to our credit that we are so well-known for our firm opposition to war and certain other forms of violence. Why, then, are we sometimes eager to give a pass to the violence of abortion?

Neufeld is right to keep the concerns of women in difficult pregnancy

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

Two contrasting subjects emerged in this issue—those beginning their journeys and those in their encore years.

First, two feature stories address retirement and aging. Our cover story features a couple in their 60s, Deb and Don Schmidt, who retired as a pastor and a social worker, respectively. At 45 years of marriage, they embarked on the Camino de Santiago, a six-week, 500-mile walking pilgrimage. The "miles symbolized stepping stones marking the completion of careers … and their next juncture," writes Laurie Oswald Robinson on page 12.

Second, several articles highlight the many new young leaders emerging in the Mennonite world. A news story (page 34) and the editorial (page 56) mention 20 leaders under the age of 40, and surely more than that exist.

These two themes demonstrate the variety of generations involved in our denomination. As some retire from leadership positions, others are just beginning on their paths.

As the Kaufmans write on page 18, "Congregations that value diversity will recognize the presence of seniors in their midst. They will be placed in the center of church life, perhaps even in seating arrangements. What a gift it would be to have younger members choosing to sit next to seniors during worship!"

Let this remind us to value this balance and find ways to support one another.

Our usual practice this time of year is to name those who contributed to *The Mennonite*. Donors gave more than $87,500 in 2013. We dedicated four pages (44-47) to thank those who support us financially.

Finally, this is the final issue with editor Everett J. Thomas' oversight. We will miss his leadership these past 13 years and wish him the best as his journey continues.—*Editor*

Parents of slain son show compassion for his killers

NEWTON, Kan.—Allan and Jeanne Howe, members of Reba Place Fellowship in Evanston, Ill., traveled to Los Angeles in December 2013 for the funeral of their son James Marcus Howe, 42, who was shot to death on his front porch in a tussle with thugs trying to force their way into his home the day before Thanksgiving.

His wife was wounded and hospitalized, his young son traumatized.

An article in the Dec. 23, 2013, *Los Angeles Times* called the Howes peace-loving Mennonites, saying, "There's no room in their faith for vengeance, judgment or hate."

Marcus (in photo) was an up-and-coming director in the world of reality television.

At a news conference in December 2013, his friends shared stories of his loving nature. His parents also extolled his virtues.

When asked how he felt, his father said, "I am angry that the people that did this did not get enough love in their lives."

In a later interview, Allan, a minister and retired university professor, said: "When Jesus says love your enemies, do good to those who hurt you … we take that pretty seriously. The Christian faith underlies everything we do."

The article states that "the Howes, who adopted James Marcus when he was 5 months old, are committed to following Jesus' example of compassion and forgiveness—even if that requires painful reconciliation with incomprehensible loss."—*Gordon Houser*

CPT photo

Christmas vigil in Colombia

Christians in El Garzal, Colombia, worship at a late-night Christmas vigil in December 2013. Christian Peacemaker Teams workers Stewart Vzriesinga and Jhon Henry accompanied Salvador Alcántara, Garzal's twice-displaced leader and pastor, and his family so they could spend Christmas with family and loved ones in El Garzal. Salvador and his family had to leave the area again last May because of death threats. Salvador described the feeling of being back, albeit for only three days, as like being reborn.—*CPT*

Cornelius J. Dyck lived and taught history

ELKHART, Ind.—Cornelius J. (C.J.) Dyck not only researched and taught Mennonite history, he lived it, and he will be remembered for the wisdom, wit and commitment with which he did all three.

Dyck died Jan. 10 in Normal, Ill., where he and Wilma, his wife, had been living for several years. For 35 years he worked in administration at Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Chicago, and taught at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart. He also made significant contributions in the General Conference Mennonite Church, through Mennonite Central Committee assignments in Europe and South America, in Mennonite World Conference and as an ordained pastor.

Dyck was born in Russia on Aug. 20, 1921, and immigrated to Laird, Saskatchewan, with his family at the age of 5. He joined the Mennonite church through baptism in 1939.

In addition to teaching, Dyck serv as director of the Institute of Mennonite Studies, a research and publishi agency of AMBS, beginning in 1958 and continuing for 21 years.

Dyck's own publications include A *Introduction to Mennonite History,* which is still being used as a textboo in many Mennonite high schools and colleges into the 21st century. He served as editor of *Mennonite Encycl pedia* Vol. V, a 10-year project that resulted in a 960-page volume publishe in 1990. He and others translated an edited the writings of Dirk Philips, a volume published in the Classics of t Radical Reformation series (Herald Press 1992).—*AMBS*

Bluffton players give shoes—and hope

BLUFFTON, Ohio—Three Bluffton University football players helped distribute shoes to 230 students at Padu

Academy in Indianapolis on Jan. 13 as part of an effort coordinated by Samaritan's Feet International and the Heartland Collegiate Athletic Conference.

Bluffton junior Eric Fox of Brunswick, Ohio, and seniors Shawn Frost of Edison, Ohio, and Josh Runda of Lima, Ohio, were among this season's first-team all-HCAC players who traveled to Indianapolis with their coaches for the event. The student-athletes washed the children's feet and gave them new socks before fitting them with the new shoes.

The conference raised roughly $7,000 during the 2013 football season for Samaritan's Feet. The Charlotte, N.C.-based charitable organization believes a new pair of shoes "can be a tangible foundation of hope to a person in need," according to its website.

About $1,000 of the total raised throughout the HCAC was generated at Bluffton. On Nov. 2, 2013, Bluffton hosted one of the games designated as a "Barefoot Game"—in which coaches go shoeless—to bring attention to the cause.

Bluffton head coach Tyson Veidt accompanied his players to Padua Academy, a school for students through eighth grade. "Simply for these young people to have visitors who wanted to spend time with them was huge," he says.—*Bluffton University*

MCC photo by Nina Linton

A safe place to play

Oscar Yoadel, 4, plays at Guarderia Samuelito, his day care in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, run by the Bolivian Evangelical Mennonite Church, a Mennonite Central Committee partner. His father, Oscar Pinto, is a single dad who would not be able to work full-time without the daycare.—*MCC*

International Women's Fund awards applicants

MINNEAPOLIS—Twenty-two women from Tanzania, Kenya, Congo, South Africa, India, Korea, Paraguay, Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico are recipients of the International Women's Fund scholarships awarded by Mennonite Women USA for 2014.

These women are all studying theology and church leadership in local Bible schools, colleges or universities to prepare for pastoral leadership, teaching and pastoral care in their communities. The board of directors of MW USA annually awards $10,000 for women who are referred by local church leaders.

These scholarship funds have assisted more than 80 women over the past 15 years. Graduates have gone on to serve in significant leadership roles in their congregations, conferences and internationally, with organizations such as Mennonite World Conference.

Visit MW USA's website for a complete list of the 2014 grantees.—*Mennonite Women USA*

Everence announces presidential succession plans

GOSHEN, Ind.—The board of directors of Everence has announced a presidential succession committee and process that includes contracting with an executive search consultant from MHS Consulting Services.

The board asked Pat Swartzendruber, an Everence board member, to chair the committee. Swartzendruber has served on the Everence board for nine years and previously chaired the succession committee that recommended the 2006 appointment of Larry D. Miller, the current Everence president and CEO.

Other succession committee members include D. Duane Oswald, Everence board chair (ex-officio); R. Clair Sauder, Praxis board member; Richard Thomas, Mennonite Church USA Executive Board representative; Donna Voth, Everence board member; LaVern Yutzy, Everence board member (his term ended Dec. 31, 2013, but he will continue on committee); Ervin Stutzman, Mennonite Church USA Executive Director (ex-officio).

The committee anticipates announcing the appointment of a new CEO for employment in September.—*Everence*

Service Adventure unit unplugs for a week

ELKHART, Ind.—During the week of Dec. 2-8, 2013, participants in the Albuquerque (N.M.) Service Adventure unit fasted from technology.

They hit the switch on everything with a screen. All computers, TVs, iPods, cellphones, Kindles, and the unit's Wii and DVD players were powered down. The few exceptions included the house phone, a computer for work, and a cellphone—only for traveling emergencies.

The unit kept busy with the weekly worship nights and learning activities, made crafts and Christmas decorations, played games, read books and cleaned. —*Mennonite Mission Network*

MennoMedia reinstates Canadian pricing

HARRISONBURG, Va., and KITCHENER, Ont.—Beginning Jan. 1, MennoMedia increased its prices in Canada by 10 percent. This is due to increased costs of doing business in Canada, including shipping costs, as well as a yearlong drop in the Canadian-U.S. dollar exchange rate.

Russ Eanes, executive director, says: "We regret that we have to do this, but the difference in the exchange rate over the past year is the primary reason. Since late spring, the Canadian dollar has dropped against the U.S. dollar. For several years we have had a policy of adjusting prices, based on that exchange rate. It has gone both ways [up and down] more than once. —*MennoMedia*

Our punk prayers

Sara Dick is associate pastor at Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

Two years ago, several women pulled brightly colored balaclavas over their heads and ran before the altar of Moscow's Christ the Savior Cathedral. Someone pushed "play" on a stereo, and they began their dancing, yelling protest against church and government corruption and their repression of women, gay men and poor people generally.

The activists alternated between their irate version of Rachmaninoff's usually reverent choral masterpiece, "Rejoice, O Virgin," and political rants yelled over a bass guitar and drums. Their "punk prayer" earned them the charge of "hooliganism motivated by religious hatred" and a 24-month prison sentence.

As someone who loves the church and freedom of speech and separation of church and state and Rachmaninoff—and whose Anabaptist ancestors came through Russia and the Ukraine—I am fascinated by the protests of this collective of women known as Pussy Riot.

I contemplate these young women who fear for the future of their country and their rights within it, and try to put myself in their place. When the head of their church says Putin is "a miracle from God" even as he's known to be corrupt and indifferent to democracy and human rights, they are wise to question whether the church is speaking faithfully to those on the margins of society and in the seats of power. I also put myself in the place of the Russian Orthodox faithful who worship, eat meals and read the Bible together, just as I do. I imagine a group of anonymous protesters barging into the sanctuary of my church, singing "Praise God from whom all hypocrisy flows" and then posting it to YouTube alongside a list of complaints about the Mennonite church. The church is wise to question the motives of such noise-makers.

'Punk prayers' were then and still are necessary for the well-being of the church and the world.

In the run-up to the Sochi Olympics, Russia granted amnesty to several political prisoners, including two from the punk-rock band. Every Olympics prompts the host country to try to impress visitors by "tidying up" the surface of things, whether by building a gigantic high-tech stadium, getting rid of homeless persons living in the area, or improving its human rights reputation. Let us not be fooled by appearances—neither Russia's nor our own.

Mennonites were drawn to Russia 200 years ago by Catherine the Great's offer of free land ar free expression of faith—100 years before the Orthodox cathedral in Moscow was built. Those Mennonites could not have imagined the politica antics of this punk-rock band, but they wanted th same freedom.

"Punk prayers" were then and still are ne essary for the well-being of the church and the world. If we take "punk" to refer to "punk rock,' with its loud and aggressive style, we might consider adding volume and insistence to our prayer for justice, freedom and safety for all people and all creation. Last December's Advent texts reminded us of John the Baptist, who wore outlandish clothing and proclaimed—loudly—the need for repentance and justice in a first-centur Jewish punk prayer: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bea fruit worthy of repentance" (Matthew 3:7b-8).

If we take "punk" to refer to the glowing stick used to light fireworks, what might our prayers ignite in us, in the church or in the world? What complacency or apath toward suffering and injustice nee to be burned away?

John the Baptist describes Jesus ministry in flaming terms: "He wil baptize you with the Holy Spirit an fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshin floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:11b-12).

John's words shock and frighten his listeners- including this listener 2,000 years later. What si must I confess to be ready for the Savior? What chaff within me will he burn away? And what of the institutional sins and social chaff we cling to Those who protest injustice in balaclavas on the altars of our churches are pressing the same que tions John did, though in secular terms.

I'll enjoy watching the winter Olympics this year, as I do every four years. This year, I pray fo grace to look beneath the surface for the "punk prayers" being uttered on the streets and in the churches, within stadiums and parliaments, and wherever justice and freedom are sought by thos brave enough to speak out. TM

Mennonites and land

At 1:30 a.m. on Dec. 18, 2013, five Mennonites from the Nuevo Progreso colony in Campeche, Mexico, were released from the Chetumal prison, where they had been held since Feb. 7, 2013. (Two other colleagues had been released a short while earlier.) Although the details regarding their arrest remain shrouded in confusion, authorities had formally charged the men with illegally clearing trees from a 47-acre tract of land they were in the process of purchasing in Quintana Roo. For 10 months the Mennonite community in Mexico followed the labyrinthine legal process that swirled around the imprisonment and ensuing trial of the seven men. By the time of their release, the colony had spent several million pesos in legal fees and was forced to pay a fine of 600,000 pesos. In addition to losing ownership of the land, the colony must also reforest the section that had been cleared.

The story was clearly complicated by the duplicity of a middle man, paid by the Mennonites to negotiate between buyer and seller. Moreover, land titles are sometimes murky in Mexico, and Mennonites have frequently found themselves frustrated by confusing, sometimes contradictory laws, competing government bureaucracies and the persistent reality of corruption. But beneath all the surface complexities of the story is a deeper, more enduring, challenge: the Mennonite relationship to land. Indeed, one reading of Mennonite history could be told entirely through the lens of land and the related issues of ownership, stewardship, profitability, inheritance, group identity and the ties forged by land to local markets, the legal system and the larger nation.

In the Old Testament, God promised land to Abraham and his descendents as a gift and a blessing (Genesis 5:18-21; 28:13). In Scripture, land is almost always associated with the hope of productive vineyards, fields of ripened grain, rich pasture, milk and honey, and large families. That same promise and hope is anchored in the stories of Mennonite history. The genealogies of many North American Mennonites, for example, almost always include heroic accounts of hardworking pioneers who cleared the forest, broke prairie sod and drained swamps in order to make the land productive for their families and communities.

When Mennonites first moved to Mexico in the 1920s, they came seeking religious freedoms; they were also looking for land. In the century since then, the region around Cuauhtémoc has become a major producer of the country's corn, grain and apples. Mexican political leaders have frequently praised the Mennonites as model farmers, granting them religious, legal and cultural concessions in light of their contribution to the economy.

Yet possession of the land is never simple. Mennonites in Paraguay, Belize and Brazil—seeking economic security for their growing families and expanding colonies—have clearcut forests, thereby destroying fragile ecosystems and contributing to the large global problem of deforestation. For the past decade, Mennonites in northern Mexico have been locked in a tense battle with local activists over water rights in the face of shrinking water tables. And pressure on arable land by Mennonite investors and agribusinesses has played a role in the dislocation of indigenous people from village to city.

It would be easy for North American Mennonites to interpret the recent legal action by Mexican authorities in Campeche as a justifiable response to a pattern of aggressive Mennonite land-grabbing. And maybe, with more investigation, the facts will bear out that interpretation. Yet the fate of all growing agrarian communities—whether that be the Old Order Amish in the United States or Old Colony Mennonites in Central and South America—is inextricably tied to land acquisition. It is no accident that Mennonite periodicals in Mexico are filled with reports about the prospects of available land in Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and regions as remote as Kirgistan.

Mennonites in the future will continue to buy land and make that land productive. But in the context of a competitive global economy, disappearing water tables, new pesticides and the promises of genetically modified seed, the challenge will be to ask difficult questions of land stewardship: What does it mean to take relationships with indigenous neighbors seriously? Can we forfeit short-term profits for more sustainable forms of production? Will our communities commit themselves to seeking the welfare of the larger country where they reside?

The biblical promise of land was never intended for Israel alone. Rather, through Israel "all the nations of the earth would be blessed" (Genesis 22:18). Such is the challenge for Mennonites in the future—not just in Mexico but also here in North America.

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

> The challenge for Mennonites in the future will be to ask difficult questions of land stewardship.

Family warmth helps pass on religion

One concern many families of faith share is how to pass on their faith to their children. At least one sociologist has made this a major project in his scholarly career. It turns out that one of the most important factors in children adopting religion is the warmth of the father—or if not the father, then the grandfather.

Vern Bengtson started the Longitudinal Study of Generations, a multidisciplinary investigation of families, aging and social change and has followed families since 1970. He is coauthor of *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down Across Generations* and *How Families Still Matter: A Longitudinal Study of Youth in Two Generations*.

Associate editor Amy Frykholm interviews Bengtson in the Dec. 25, 2013, issue of *Christian Century*.

Bengtson states up front that "the highest generational transmission [of religion from generation to generation] occurs in families with a high degree of warmth—particularly if the father is perceived as warm and close."

In other words, being role models, taking the kids to church, being involved in church and having devotional activities at home are all good, but what really counts is what Bengtson calls "intergenerational solidarity or family cohesion."

Frykholm asks what we want to know: Why is fatherly warmth so important? Bengtson says he doesn't know. Generally mothers have more contact with the children, and fathers are more absent. He does, however, offer a hunch, that there is something about religion, at least in American society, that is male-influenced. Thus, he says, "if a father picks up on religion, the kids are going to pick up on it, too. And if the father is indifferent to religion, the kids may be indifferent to religion. This is especially true in father-son relationships."

Turns out it's not just fathers that are important in transmitting religion but grandfathers as well. Bengtson tells the story of a family in which the parents split up, and the mother was dysfunctional. "The daughter," Bengtson says, "who is now in her 40s, talked about how on Sundays Grandpa would take them to church, and they would all sit together. He always had a red carnation in his lapel, and it was the same Sunday after Sunday. She said, 'I felt so secure.' "

So what does religion transmission even mean? How do you know if it's taken place? Frykholm asks.

Bengtson points out that they didn't just ask about church attendance and membership. The study included questions about religious intensity, he says, such as, "How religious would you say you are?" They also looked at similarity between the answers of the children and those of the parents.

Which groups do it best? Frykholm asks.

"Mormons, Jews and evangelical Christians have the highest rate of transmission," Bengtson says. He notes that Catholics, Mainline Protestants and Eastern Orthodox assume the family but put more emphasis on ritual.

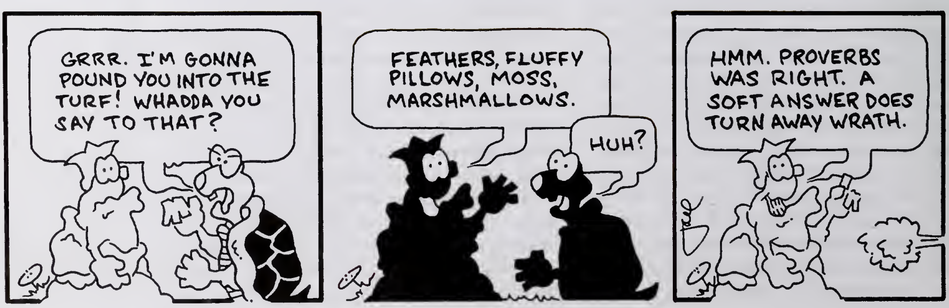
He also makes clear that he's measuring religious intensity, not denominational affiliation. So it's not about Mennonite parents producing Mennonite children but parents with a religious intensity passing that on to their children.

One interesting discovery Bengtson made, he says, "is that the degree of religious influence across generations has not changed much since the '60s and '70s, despite the forces in culture that indicate they should have changed: increasing secularization with decreasing church attendance." In other words, "Parents and grandparents influence their children in much the same way as they did in the 1970s."

This may feel sobering to those of us who are fathers, seeing how it seems to fall on our shoulders. But it also gives us some insight into what we should be emphasizing in our families: warmth and cohesion.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


GRRR. I'M GONNA POUND YOU INTO THE TURF! WHADDA YOU SAY TO THAT?
FEATHERS, FLUFFY PILLOWS, MOSS, MARSHMALLOWS.
HUH?
HMM. PROVERBS WAS RIGHT. A SOFT ANSWER DOES TURN AWAY WRATH.

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—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “Cooking might be the most important factor in fixing our public health crisis. It’s the single most important thing you can do for your health.” —Michael Pollan

Drastic climate change ahead

An analysis of isotopes in marine fossils from around the world yielded the most complete record of Earth’s temperatures yet—and showed that the planet is heating up at a rate unprecedented in the past 11,300 years. Scientists say that if it weren’t for greenhouse gas emissions, a cooling trend that began 5,000 years ago after a shift in the planet’s orbit and angle would likely be continuing, advancing Earth toward another ice age. Instead, global warming at its current pace will heat the planet between 2 and 12 degrees further by 2100, challenging many species’ ability to adapt. “The climate changes to come,” says NASA climate researcher Gavin Schmidt, “are going to be larger than anything that human civilization has seen in its entire existence.”—*The Week*

Falling in love

In “Notes on 21st Century Relationships” in *FT Magazine*, Douglas Coupland cites survey data suggesting time and that some psychologists believe that human beings are only capable of five or six loves in a lifetime. One lesson is, don’t use them up too quickly.—*New York Times*

Affluenza: the new plea

Critics of the American judicial system have long contended that the rich can get away with murder, says Matthew Fleischer in latimes.com. Now that privilege has a name: the “affluenza” defense. Ethan Couch, 16, of Fort Worth, Texas, was sentenced only to probation last December for the crime of getting wildly drunk, driving his pickup 30 mph over the speed limit, and killing four pedestrians and leaving a friend brain-damaged and paralyzed. Texas Judge Jean Boyd accepted the defense argument that Couch, whose millionaire parents set him few boundaries, suffered from “affluenza”—a “psychosis of extreme wealth” that diminished his understanding of the consequences of his actions. Psychologist G. Dick Miller testified that “he had freedoms that no young man would be able to handle.” The judge spared Couch the 20-year jail term sought by prosecutors and shipped him off to a $450,000 rehab facility in California, featuring equine therapy and cooking classes, all paid for by his father.—*The Week*

4%

Decrease in homelessness nationwide in the past year

13%

Increase in homelessness in the past year in New York City

20%

Of the homeless in the United States are in New York and Los Angeles.

—theatlantic.com

One year after Newtown

In the year since the Newtown massacre, 194 children ages 12 and under have been shot to death in the United States. At least 52 of those deaths involved a child handling an unsecured gun, and 127 of the children died in their own homes.—*Mother Jones*

Is online Communion the real thing?

As online worship becomes more common in some churches, leaders within the United Methodist Church are debating whether the denomination should condone online Communion. About 30 denominational leaders met last October after Central United Methodist Church in Concord, N.C., announced plans to launch an online campus that potentially would offer online Communion.—*Religion News Service*

Cooking is cheaper, healthier

- Roasted chicken dinner for four: $14
- Dinner for a family of four at McDonald’s: $23 to $28
- Half a roasted chicken breast, peas, baked potato, applesauce, milk: 571 calories
- Average meal ordered at McDonald’s: 1,038 calories
- According to a recent Cambridge University study of 1,888 people, those who cook up to five times a week were 47 percent more likely to still be alive after 10 years.—*Yes! Magazine*

Numbers to ponder

- Millions of cubic meters of water used by tar sands companies in 2011 from the Athabasca River alone: **370**
- Millions of cubic meters of water used by households in Toronto in 2011: **388**
- Amount paid by tar sands companies for water in 2012: **$0**
- Average amount paid by the typical Toronto household for water each year: **$674**
- Earthquakes recorded in Youngstown, Ohio, from 1776 to 2010: **0**
- Earthquakes recorded in 2011 after a nearby well pumping wastewater produced by fracking came online: **109**
- Earthquakes in Youngstown since the wastewater well was shut down Dec. 31, 2011: **0**

—Yes! Magazine

Don and Deb Schmidt find spiritual growth on the Camino de Santiago, a 500-mile walking pilgrimage.

582
Kms
A Santiago
Gobierno de La Rioja

Don and Deb Schmidt pose in front of a Camino trail marker on a day's hike occurring in the first third of their pilgrimage in northern Spain.
Photo provided

Walking their way into retirement

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

The northern Spain sun beat down on Deb Schmidt as she guzzled water and followed her husband, Don, to a roadside café. They lunched there before walking several more hours that day on the Camino de Santiago, a six-week, 500-mile walking pilgrimage. She was grateful to rest her sore knees. On the first day of their route, which began Sept. 1, 2013, in St. Jean Pie de Port, France, the mountainous climb had caused the injury to set in. But it was not enough to deter her from completing the pilgrimage, which wound westward to Cathedral Santiago de Compostela. God willing, they hoped to reach their destination by mid-October.

For centuries, this route led countless pilgrims to the cathedral, which tradition says holds the remains of the apostle James. A prominent practice in medieval times, the pilgrimage fell into obscurity before becoming popular again recently. It has always offered a pathway into deeper spirituality, and Don and Deb also hoped the experience would help launch them more reflectively and spiritually into a new chapter of their lives. Deb, 65, had recently retired from 18 years as a pastor and a chaplain. And Don, 66, had retired from a long career in social work. They believed the miles symbolized stepping stones marking the completion of careers, 45 years of marriage and their next juncture.

It didn't take long for their dreams for Camino to be reshaped by the daily realities of getting up at 5:30 a.m. to log 17 miles by mid-afternoon.

It didn't take long for their dreams for Camino to be reshaped by the daily realities of getting up at 5:30 a.m. to log 17 miles by mid-afternoon. The first day, they had a steep ascent up and over the Pyrenees Mountains into Spain. They discovered that walking one's way into growth while lugging a 17-pound backpack had its price: wounded joints, blistered toes and the stretching of one's soul and body. For Deb, that stretching came in the form of letting up on driving herself. Initially, she felt it was important to walk every step for the pilgrimage to be successful. Instead, her injuries required they take a bus for a short time midway into their trek, dashing her version of completing a "perfect" Camino. And Don faced unexpected emotional and mental vulnerabilities.

"Because my bad knees caused us to walk about 12 miles a day instead of 17, we had to take a bus for 100 miles to make our scheduled flight home," Deb said during a Dec. 26, 2013, interview. "I struggled with that a great deal. I was angry at myself because I am a driven person in a lot of ways. It had been my idea in the first place to do this, and I felt I was the one who was faltering," she said.

She continued: "Like most pilgrims, when I started out, I vowed to walk every step of the 800 kilometers [500 miles]. I felt that if I didn't walk every step of the journey, I would fail. But the slowing down became a gift to me. It helped me learn that the journey is not about every step taken but what happens to you along the way. A pilgrimage is not about physically completing the mileage but about entering into the journey and letting it shape you."

In that same interview, Don said the difficulty of the journey for him occurred when it became more spiritually impactful than he had planned on it being. "You had six or seven hours to walk every day, and during that time, you spent a lot of time in your head and heart, reviewing everything you had ever thought or done, or anything you might ever want to do," he said.

After the first week, in the midst of walking, Don and Deb heard each other snuffling as feelings surfaced into tears. "Being physically tired and kind of emotionally wrung out tapped deep wells of emotion that we were unaware were there," she said. "Some of the hardest lessons on

Deb Schmidt hikes along a portion of the trail called the "meseta." Photo provided the trail were learning to allow others to care for you and witness to you and to not have all answers or to be the strong one all the time. The walking and the grind strips away everything, and you are just left with who you are in the inside and what you see in other people."

Walking with the world

Even as the emotional and physical costs mounted, Don and Deb were simultaneously enriched with relationships forged with fellow pilgrims from around the world, they said. While the daily walking itself was threaded with contemplation, the evenings provided a diverse tapestry of community of people from all five continents. They shared meals with strangers turned friends, even though they spoke different languages. With gestures and smiles, good bread and wine and the solidarity of having braved similar challenges, hearts opened and stories were told. One cared less about who slept in the next bunk and more about getting enough sleep amid the stormy sea of snoring. The first night, the couple slept in a large room with 118 people who had to share two bathrooms.

The Camino gave them instant friends, Deb said. They experienced common vulnerabilities and trials, all of which established bonds they couldn't understand rationally but felt emotionally and spiritually. "We experienced the incredible kindnesses and hospitality of people every day," she said.

"And when met up with others at the café, you asked their names and where they lived and why they were walking the Camino," she went on. "You hardly ever asked someone what they did for a living. The Camino became so much more about you as a person rather than what you did. It really caused you to shed your public persona and become your true, unvarnished and stripped-down self."

One of her most significant moments of letting go was when they met a man named Stan, who had common knee injuries. "He wanted me to take his knee brace, and at first, I said no," Deb said. "Later that day, he came up behind us and said, 'I've been trying to catch you all day, because I really want you take my knee brace.' Don said under his breath, 'Just take his knee brace, Deb.' So I finally did. I wore it every day, and it really helped. Every morning as I put it on, I thought of how Stan sacrificed his comfort for mine. I never saw him again, but his presence stayed with me all the way."

Pilgrims also shared emotional and spiritual

Don Schmidt tends Deb's blistered toe after a day of walking. Photo provided

> You spent a lot of time in your head and heart, reviewing everything you had ever thought or done, or anything you might ever want to do.
> —Don Schmidt

An evening meal with fellow pilgrims in Ciruaña, Spain. Photo provided

Deb and Don Schmidt at the end of their pilgrimage: the Cathedral Santiago de Compostela.
Photo provided

pains. Even though backpacks were kept light, with two changes of clothes and bare necessities, people carried heavy interior baggage. “One day we sat with a gentleman from Holland who hardly spoke any English,” Don said. “I noticed he wore a wedding band. I pointed to his wedding band and through gestures managed to ask whether he was traveling alone or with his wife. He told me his wife had died six months [earlier] and that he was walking for her. We had that kind of experience over and over again at the end of long days.”

We carry around a longing that can be sometimes hard to identify or touch.—Deb Schmidt

Many pilgrims were walking to heal from relationship wounds. One group from Ireland was walking to raise money for cancer research.

“Many people had lost mates,” Deb said. “We often cried together. Some folks carried a pebble or stone as a symbol of carrying a burden of a loved one—a wayward child, a spouse, a parent. … We became tied to each other through our stories and the commonality of carrying stuff. It was different stuff. But it was still stuff.”

Walking the Camino into the center of one’s soul

A pilgrimage entails more than the miles traversed, as it shakes loose desires in one’s interior landscape, Deb said. In the midst of the sweat, blisters and constant need for water, one begins t thirst for new vistas to unfold in one’s soul. The couple said the Camino connected them more deeply with the historical Jesus, who lived in earl Palestine and told parables about the same kinds of vineyards, olive gardens and sheep they saw along the way. They did not structure their days around Scripture reading or journal time. The walking became their praying, and the stories shared with others proclaimed the gospel. The lush green landscape, with its village vistas and tinkling cow bells, connected them to their growing hearts. To a person, no matter what their religion or lack of, their friends shared spiritual insights gleaned along the way, inspiring the Christian faith of the couple.

“I think all of us search for ways to plug into deeper spiritual meaning, but we don’t always have the tools to do that,” Deb said. “So we carry around a longing that can be sometimes hard to identify or touch. Church doesn’t always give us the fullest, richest or deepest experience of God. And then, someone or something comes along that piques those longings in new ways.” That was the case for Deb on her annual summer retreat in 2012. That’s when she read excerpts in *Living Into Focus*, written by Arthur Paul Boers, a former professor at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblica Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., who briefly described his Camino in that book. He also wrote extensively about his pilgrimage in *The Way Is Made by Walking* (InterVartisty Press, 2007).

“I was so captivated by his account that I reread it six or seven times,” she said. “When I came home, I told Don about it. We had been planning a retirement trip, likely to Peru. So when I shared how I thought the Camino could help us share a spiritual retreat, I thought he’d say, ‘What, are you out of your mind?’ Surprisingly, he replied, ‘Count me in.’ ”

Gaining gratefulness with each step

By the time they reached their destination on

Oct. 15, the path had yielded surprises around each bend that satisfied their longings for a deeper connection to God through gratitude: for the beauty of creation, no-frills living, the renewal of marital bonds and a resymbolized sense of home.

"We were amazed how there was not one day when we did not face some kind of trauma, and every morning we joked, 'What will be our breaking point today?'" Deb said. "But also not a day went by without experiencing some kind of mountain-top emotion, great conversation and incredible beauty. On the trail, I thought often of a phrase from the novel *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry*. He is walking through Europe, and the lush landscape causes him to 'be humbled by the green.'"

The all-encompassing tasks of securing a sufficient day's hike, food and lodging burned off the fog of worrying about bigger things, i.e. the world situation and their family in Kansas, they said. The couple was stripped down to what Richard Rohr calls "the naked now."

"We did not worry about our three sons and their spouses and our seven grandchildren because we were so engrossed in surviving every day," Deb said. "It's not that we stopped loving them; it's just that we began to experience the freedom to be in the now, in a moment so full that it becomes enough."

Don agreed. "By having no electronics or cell phones, we didn't worry about the U.S. government shut down," he said. "Our focus narrowed down to our own life journey and the emotions one finally tends to without all the busy static back home. There was a freedom in that simplicity."

Their family was thousands of miles away, but they still had each other, albeit with the same personality differences they had grappled with for four decades. Deb said, "Our kids jokingly said before we left that they were worried about our marriage on this trip because the two of us are so different."

Don said that over and over again they felt like the Camino was a second honeymoon, all except for sleeping in bunk beds in a room full of other people. "It renewed our relationship, because we had gone our separate ways because of our separate work lives," he said. "On the trail, our differences helped us complement one another—I nursed her feet and scouted out our next café, and Deb was the big picture planner."

The busyness back home was waiting for them, especially in the midst of the holiday frenzy. However, they continued to bask in the glow of what they had learned about staying present to each day, embracing simple blessings and feeling gratitude for the love they renewed. Their reflections post-Camino are akin to what the late T.S. Eliot penned: "We shall not cease from exploration and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started … and know the place for the first time."

Don and Deb Schmidt back home in their living room in Newton, Kan. Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Don said they became grateful for the ordinary basics of food and lodging at the end of a long day and learned that the ordinary was not so ordinary. "Our place to stay for the night was home," he said. "It is here now in this home where we want to keep living out the lessons of our pilgrimage—letting go, letting down, letting loose, not carrying around certain things and picking up other things, such as people's stories and what matters to them."

Deb said. "They have a saying in Nepal, that wherever you put your mat is home. The Camino taught us that home is where you are—and where your heart is."

Laurie Oswald Robinson is a free-lance writer in Newton, Kan., and the author of Forever Family.

We all need to face the reality of our own or our parents' aging.

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Necessary conversations about aging

by Marlene and Gerald Kaufman

At a library fair where we were displaying our book, *Necessary Conversations Between Adult Children and Their Aging Parents*, a woman stopped by our table. She glanced at the book cover, read the table of contents and walked away. Later she returned, spent more time examining the book, and with a pained look on her face muttered under her breath, "I can't do it," and left. We assumed she meant she couldn't talk with her adult children about aging. Perhaps she had no adult children. Maybe it was just the idea of aging itself that bothered her.

Whatever the reasons for her resistance, we all need to face the reality of our own aging or the aging of our parents. We even need to face the aging of people in our neighborhoods and churches. We do that best when we talk about it with each other. These conversations can lead to a partnership of mutual accountability, transparency and support. Clearly, everyone has an interest in assuring that it happens.

Ideally the conversations between parents and adult children begin when the parents retire. That transition signifies an end of one stage and the beginning of another. Parents are moving from a life of structure, purpose and meaning to one that is unknown. Many have feelings of self-doubt and a loss of purpose, while others are beginning to recognize some physical or cognitive losses. Some seniors have trouble talking about these changes, and it may be just as hard for their adult children. Nonetheless, it is important that the conversations begin as early as possible.

This transition comes at the same time the parents' lives are becoming more complicated. Decisions about housing, computer upgrades and finances, among other things, can make life difficult. Some of the hardest decisions are about health and end-of-life plans. Compared with earlier generations, seniors now have many more decisions to make than their parents did.

Even though there may be no immediate need to talk, getting the process started at this time allows the family to discuss the various options in a more objective and relaxed way. Parents provide full disclosure of their financial situation, the details of the will, preferences regarding housing, and other matters. Usually everything is open for discussion. Parents will welcome the opinions of their adult children. Not only can that lead to better outcomes, it allows for resolving conflicts that could surface later on. This early start enables all members to understand their feelings about the changes that are taking place and to come to peace with each other and their shared losses. This process can make the losses more bearable later on. It can also relieve adult children of guilt if they have to make decisions for their parents.

The easiest conversations about aging are the ones that happen spontaneously. They take place in the midst of the common, day-to-day interactions between parents and adult children. They may happen during a phone call, an email, casual visits, a family vacation or even in a Skype chat. Conversations can include questions about daily activities or any new challenges that parents are confronted with.

At some point, families will need to set up formal meetings. Ideally all members can be present to assure that everyone has equal input and involvement. Someone serves as a facilitator, another takes notes, and agreements are written down. Additional meetings will be set up as the need arises. The emphasis should always be on a process that is designed to respect and honor the parents, as well as the feelings and opinions of the adult children. All decisions should be handled sensitively and lovingly, even if there is not complete agreement.

As Christians, families should never go through this process alone. God calls the church community to partner with seniors and their families to care for their aging members. This is even more important for seniors who have never been married, for those who have no children or who have adult children with limitations. This family/congregation partnership is especially urgent because the percent of older members in the pews is increasing rapidly. *Road Signs for the Journey*, a survey in 2007 of Mennonite Church USA by Conrad Kanagy, indicated that members 75 and older made up 15 percent of their congregation. The church cannot ignore the reality of the change in demographics.

Compared with earlier generations, seniors now have many more decisions to make than their parents did.

While in past generations families took care of each other, today's smaller families are much more likely to be scattered geographically. Thus, the congregation plays a more important role in helping seniors and their adult children prepare for this last stage of life. They have a shared mission. Decisions that the family make inevitably impact the congregation. The implications for aging congregations are broad. Inevitably it means that pastors will devote more time visiting members in hospitals, nursing-care facilities and in their homes. They may need to offer supportive care to spouses and adult children. Funerals will become a common part of their schedule.

Pastors can be caught in the middle when there is conflict. During times of stress, family differences over housing, finances, health, end-of-life and even the funeral itself can place the pastor in a difficult position. However, when pastors get involved with families early, they can be more helpful when a crisis arises.

The church plays a prophetic role in establishing a positive stewardship legacy for families. That includes influencing how financial resources are managed. We are a part of a culture that emphasizes the rights of individuals at the expense of the community. Sociologist Robert Bellah calls it expressive individualism. In that environment, people make choices that are primarily self-serving.

On the other hand, the church can help families discuss their financial options and better understand the implications of their decisions. Among other things, it is important that seniors make wise choices for where they will live and whether they should choose expensive medical interventions that provide limited quality of life. When resources are managed in a godly way, seniors will be generous in the gifts they give to the church and its institutions. Estate planning that emphasizes good stewardship is a mission of the church.

Conversations are the only way of knowing and honoring our seniors and responding to their changing needs.

As Mennonites we have historically practiced bearing each other's burdens. Today many individuals want to be self-sufficient and maintain their independence. Others seek care in institutions. Often seniors say they don't want to be a burden on their families. By contrast, Episcopal Priest Giles Fraser says, "I *do* want to be a burden on my loved ones, just as I want them to be a burden on me—it's called looking after each other."

Caregiving can be offered in many different ways. Some adult children may move in with their declining parents or invite the parents into their home. More typically, adult children provide support through frequent visits, phone calls or assisting with various housekeeping tasks. Some adult children may take on a coordinating role to assure that support services are provided by community agencies. Whatever the family's level of involvement, the church can partner with them in arranging transportation, meals and even giving respite for adult children caregivers who need a break. Regular visits by church members to the elderly can be life-giving for both the visitor and the one visited.

Congregations that value diversity will recognize the presence of seniors in their midst. They will be placed in the center of church life, perhaps even in seating arrangements. What a gif it would be to have younger members choosing to sit next to seniors during worship! Everyone would be enriched by observing seniors being escorted to the platform to read the Scripture or when they lead children's worship from their wheelchair. When congregations allow seniors to withdraw, everyone is diminished. Lifespan exposure and awareness is important to everyone. Their wisdom and life experience is a gift.

The needs and losses of the seniors will be acknowledged as a part of the worship service. Although hospitalizations, rehabilitation needs and death of a spouse are always noted publically, thei other losses should not be ignored. That can include loss of purpose, hearing, inability to sing in the choir, needing assistance with walking and memory problems.

Let the conversations begin; between aging parents and their adult children, between senior members and their congregations. Conversations are the only way of knowing and honoring our seniors and responding to their changing needs. Accepting the responsibility for bearing each other's burdens means that congregations will make sure that conversations take place within families and within the church family. To fail to do that is to limit our mission as a congregation. It would be like walking by a wounded traveler while we are on our way to something more important. We care for seniors and about them best if they are sitting next to us, communing with us, aging with us and dying with us. We are family. Families talk with each other.

Marlene and Gerald Kaufman live in Akron, Pa., and are authors of Necessary Conversations Between Adult Children and Their Aging Parents *(Good Books, $12.95).*

Painholders on holy ground

The riddle of the open closed to the closed and the closed closed to the open

by Michael A. King

In our Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition we have followed Jesus and evicted whoever gets it wrong. A denominational body excommunicated my father's parents for starting a Sunday school. My aunt tells of that 1930s' "chilly morning, when the little bishop with the cold sharp eyes came driving up our lane in his box-like Model-T … to tell my parents [they] … were going to be put out" (Evelyn King Mumaw, *The Merging*, DreamSeeker Books, 2000).

In the 1990s, the same denominational body excommunicated for its stand on homosexuality a congregation I had pastored in the 1980s. My father's family would have approved.

It seems Mennonites were ahead of the times. Today literal and verbal bombs maim bodies and spirits. Chasms open across church, culture, politics, faith traditions and world. We fight about how Scripture is to be interpreted, including how literally, about sexuality, abortion, evolution, gun rights, climate change, whether government is problem or solution and so much more. We battle not only over how to bridge differences but even over whether to bridge them.

As one who feels in my bones the wounds centuries of splitting have inflicted, I dream of better. I dream of what might happen if more of us became painholders on holy ground.

Today literal and verbal bombs maim bodies and spirits.

But to set the stage for painholders, let me (1) probe the riddle lurking when we try to bridge divisions, (2) introduce communities of discernment as a way forward and (3) highlight the need for heroes able to hold the pain involved.

The riddle

I crashed into the riddle when studying discussions of delegates who excommunicated my former congregation. In my dissertation research, I drew on the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer to look for evidence of success or failure in the delegate conversations. Based on the essential ingredient of conversational success I saw in Gadamer's thought—openness to grow when faced with the other's understandings—I found mostly failure. And I spied the riddle:

"Gadamer's prejudice toward openness … seems to place problematic limits on precisely the unfettered conversations it means to encourage. It leaves inadequate room for conversation partners who believe the essential integrity of their prejudice will be violated by any compromise. … They hold the stance precisely because it is the one 'right' stance required for them to be true to their community and their understanding of its doctrines; how then can they allow their stance to be enlarged? Meanwhile it seems Gadamer cannot accept their closure without violating the nonnegotiable openness on which his conversation depends" (*Fractured Dance: Gadamer and a Mennonite Conflict Over Homosexuality*, Pandora Press U.S., 2001).

With Gadamer, I conclude, true conversation requires genuine openness to the other. I'm inspired by the Apostle Paul's 1 Corinthians 13 conviction that now we know only in part. Hence we'll want to allow our partial understandings to grow. And growth involves openness to views other than the one we start out holding.

But "the open" find it hard to be open to "the closed." And "the closed" see it as violating their stand to be open to "the open." So I can preach until I'm blue in the face (and my face is often blue) that Christians will be open to treasures in perspectives other than our own. Yet the "closed" will hear me as imposing an openness that closes them out, as demanding they play a game rigged against them. Should they in turn insist our divisions can heal only if I yield to their One True Truth, I'll likewise experience the game as rigged. That's the riddle.

From battle to communities of discernment

Can we solve the riddle? If we could do it easily, we'd not lob more missiles by the hour. Yet I dream of painholders helping us try.

Their work is rooted in our moving from battling each other to collaborating in discernment. Among Christians, I'd define discernment as involving the community of believers gathered in Jesus' name around Scripture in the presence of the Holy Spirit to let God show us the way through the urgent, complicated and often divisive issues of a given time and place.

The Jesus of Matthew 18:18-20 inspires this vision for becoming communities of discernment. When two or three gather in his name, Matthew's

Jesus promises to be present. Jesus also amazingly says that what we bind or loose on earth is bound or loosed in heaven.

What if Jesus is giving us the holy and agonizing mandate properly to discern in our given settings how God is inviting us to think and speak and live?

If so, openness is involved—but it's an openness to Scripture and Spirit. The call is not simply to be open to each other's fallible human opinions but also together to tussle with something from Beyond.

Amid such grappling, just maybe "the open" can begin to see some "closed" views as valuable commitments to faithful hearings of Scripture and Spirit. And just maybe "the closed" can see some "open" views as not only misguided efforts to dilute the faith but as likewise flowing from Scripture and Spirit.

Painholders on holy ground

But this is difficult, complicated, agonizing work. That's why we need the painholders.

I met them one evening over supper at a retreat. Because they help lead congregational groupings geographically near each other, they not only confer regularly but are sometimes drawn into the same dynamics. My fallible impression is that they might themselves tend toward different sides of some divides.

Yet both are passionately committed to something larger than position-imposing/defending. Both love the people in their charge, whatever their views. Both root for a church grander than whatever slivers manage to remain connected if in any disagreement one side must be victorious or both must split so each may go its "faithful" way.

When divisions come, these painholders resist widening them. Instead they walk lovingly into the torment, with a courage that evokes Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego preferring life in the fiery furnace to giving up faithfulness to God. They absorb the pain. They absorb and absorb still more as they nurture not splitting but discernment.

Ceaselessly they roam among their shouting, suffering people. Relentlessly they invite the open to see in "the closed" not only blind rigidities or legalisms but a faithfulness the open ought also be open to. Endlessly they invite "the closed" to be open to the possibility that in "the open" there may be faithfulness and not only error.

The results are rarely clearcut; we live in the mess of our times. But what I glimpsed that night at supper, as they told of pain they sought to hold and not heighten, was the hope of the church. I saw that they walk on holy ground. The ground is holy because God, as the lyrics of Arna Czarnikow remind us, "walks the dark hills" even of our peaks and valleys of hate. So the painholders look for God's spoor even in the desolate deserts of division.

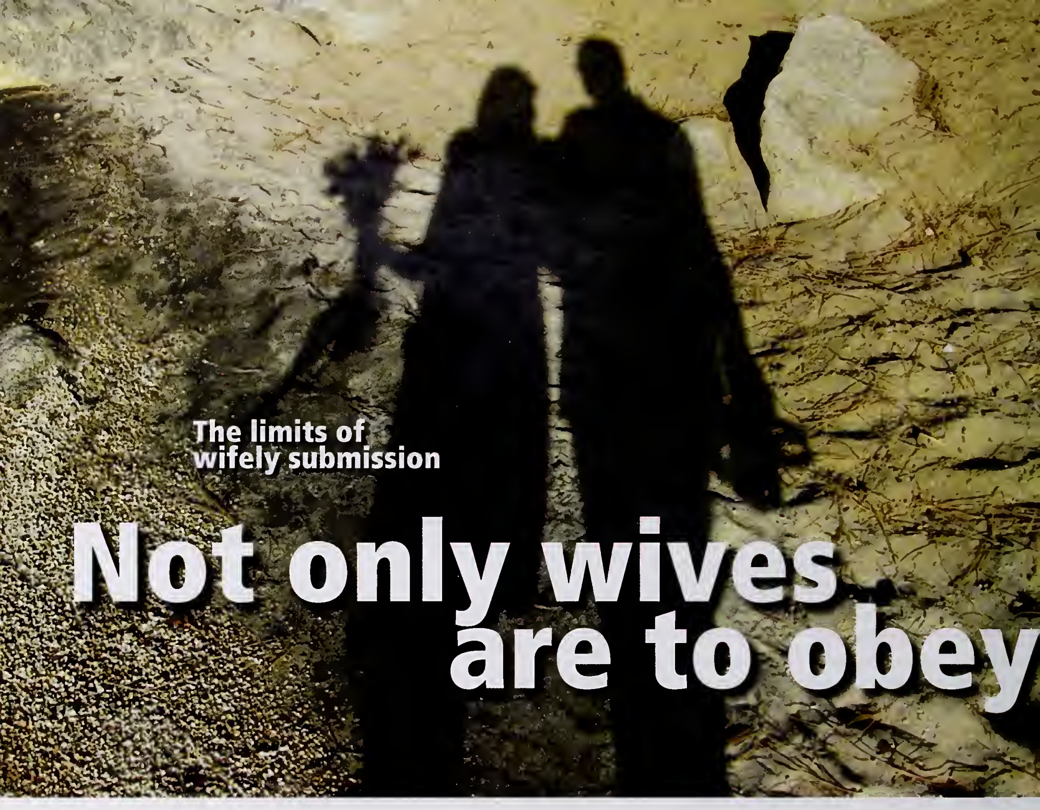
Instead of only imposing their theological biases—though like all of us they have them—they invite worshiping the God of the burning bush. They invite taking off our shoes before the God who is God beyond our human names for and understandings of God. You can see the cost in their faces. Still, Gethsemane in their bones, they hold the pain.

I dream of such painholders as models. I dream of them as offering templates for living the gospel in that far-off land whose outskirts the better angels of my splitting-prone ancestors invite us to enter: God's country. In this country we love enemies, heap blessings on those who persecute us, send forgiveness 70 times seven down like waters on those who have offended us, at last pluck from our own eye the redwood log so we can see how tiny is the speck in the other's eye.

Today many individuals want to be self-sufficient and maintain their independence. Others seek care in institutions.

As a seminary dean, I dream of seminaries, denominations and congregations coming to see painholders as the heroes of our time. I dream of teaching our students, congregants and each other that in our day painholding is a calling of callings. And I dream of painholders in turn showing us how at least to take another step toward solving the riddle of the open closed to the closed and the closed closed to the open.

Michael A. King is dean at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., which he is helping shape as a discernment training center, and is publisher of Cascadia Publishing House, LLC.



The limits of wifely submission

Not only wives are to obey

by David W. T. Brattston

What do "submission" and "obedience" entail for wives? Some Bible verses are quoted to oblige them to submit to and obey their husbands: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22 KJV); "as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything" (Ephesians 5:24 KJV); "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord" (Colossians 3:18 KJV); "The aged women [are to] … teach the young women to be … obedient to their own husbands" (Titus 2:3-5 KJV), and "ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands" (1 Peter 3:1 KJV).

The readers addressed in these passages were expected to interpret them in the same milieu and culture as the New Testament writers, within the context of all Christian literature of the day. What did submission and obedience entail for them? Did the earliest Christian writers really intend automatic subservience and powerless subjugation? No, they envisaged limits and conditions and allowed wives room for judgment and flexibility. Not only wives but all early Christians, including male Christians, were commanded to submit to others. This article examines how the first Christians understood what submission entailed, how it was meant to be understood and how much leeway and independence of action are permitted to wives.

The ancient sources demanded that all Christians submit to church leaders. A 21st-century woman can learn the proper scope of wifely submission by observing how her husband submits to the minister and other church authorities. First is Hebrews 13:17: Christians are to obey and submit to those who have rule over us in the church, that their jobs may be easier and happier. Indeed, one of the qualifications for a bishop was "having his children in subjection with all gravity; For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

Written in Rome in the first century A.D., when many apostles were still alive, First Clement addressed a situation where malcontents in the congregation at Corinth had deposed clergy in succession from the apostles and had appointed their own. Throughout 65 chapters, 1 Clement exhorts obedience to the true leaders. Chapter 57:1 summarizes: "Ye, therefore, who laid the foundation of this sedition, submit yourselves to the presbyters [elders] and receive correction so as to repent, bending the knees of your hearts."

The main proponent of submission to clergy was Ignatius, a bishop of Antioch martyred around A.D. 107. He praised the Christians at Tralles because "ye are subject to the bishop as to Jesus Christ" and exhorted them to treat the presbyters similarly. To those at Magnesia he wrote, "Be ye subject to the bishop and to one another, as Jesus Christ to the Father, according to the flesh, and the apostles to Christ, and to the Father and to the Spirit." One letter tells the Ephesians to "be subject to the bishop and presbyters that you may be sanctified, perfectly joined together, in the same mind and judgment, and that you may all speak the same thing." Last of all, Ignatius encouraged Bishop Polycarp of the city of Smyrna to see to it that Polycarp's parishioners heed him as bishop and be submissive to him and other local clergy.

Polycarp was probably "the angel of the church in Smyrna" addressed in Revelation 2:8. In his own turn, he wrote to young Christian men in Philippi that they must be "subject to the presbyters and deacons, as unto God and Christ."

About a century later came Origen, the most outstanding preacher and Bible scholar and interpreter of the first half of the third century A.D. Origen preached that various categories of Christians should be subject to those in other categories: children to parents, citizens to secular rulers, laypeople to clergy, and lower church officers to higher office-bearers. Preacher or presbyter must submit to the bishop because God has placed him above them. Likewise, there must be subjection to presbyters because the Lord set them over laypeople. The rule operates notwithstanding that a particular office-bearer is less worthy or not as intelligent, said Origen, for Jesus subjected himself to Joseph and Mary notwithstanding his true superiority.

A wife need show no more deference and no more enthusiasm in her submission to her husband than he displays toward their pastor.

In short, a wife need show no more deference and no more enthusiasm in her submission to her husband than he displays toward their pastor.

Christian writers before A.D. 250 stressed submission and obedience to secular governments. Their writings reveal what these words meant in their original context, the same context that promotes submission and obedience by wives. They show this, first, by indicating that the deference a wife is to render her husband need be no greater than what she, he or Christians in general, render to the state, for early authors used the same descriptors for both relationships. Second, just as there are limits and leeway in Christian compliance with government, so also are there for wives. The fact that Christians enjoy certain freedom of action vis-à-vis state, so the ancient literature implies a degree of freedom of action as wives.

▶

Romans 13:1-7 has been quoted in both ancient and modern times as the rule for church members not to oppose secular authorities. Submission to the head of state "as supreme" is mandated in 1 Peter 2:13 "for the Lord's sake," while the following verse extends compliance "unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers."

Origen stressed that submission and obedience to Caesar must be rendered especially by Christians who possess money, which is stamped with Caesar's image (now with an American president).

Acts 4:19-20 and Acts 5:29 teach that we must obey God rather than men, thus hinting that there are limitations to obedience and submission. Obedience and submission do not prevent Christians, including Christian husbands, from signing petitions, complaining about politicians, voting against the party in power or running for office themselves. Because the words "submit" and "submission" are used for both wives and citizens, without the early authors drawing distinctions or differences between duties to the husband or government, it appears they meant wives to exercise a degree of liberty in their submission.

If everybody is to be subject to everyone else, especially other Christians, are not husbands in some way to submit to their wives?

Christians are commanded to submit in a variety of ways to an assortment of other people, which indicates both that wives were not singled out and that there is leeway for independent action and discretion.

First Corinthians 16:16 commands submission not only to local clergy but to every fellow worker that helps and labors in the gospel. First Clement 38:1 mandates, "Let everyone be subject to his neighbor." More widely, Ephesians 5:21 encourages "submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God." First Peter 5:5 says not only "ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder" but also, "Yea, all of you be subject to one another." Besides submission to the bishop, Ignatius favored submission "to one another, as Jesus Christ to the Father, according to the flesh, and the apostles to Christ, and to the Father, and to the Spirit." More concisely, Polycarp exhorted the Philippian Christians, "Be all of you subject to one another." Neither can anything be more comprehensive than "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (1 Peter 2:13).

If everybody is to be subject to everyone else, especially other Christians, are not husbands in some way to submit to their wives? Does not such subjection reduce the rigor and degree of deference demanded when interpreting the passages quoted in the first paragraph of this article?

Neither is marriage one-sided for the husband. Verses near the main ones cited in our first paragraph lay duties on husbands toward their wives. Besides submitting themselves to their wives as another Christian, Paul commanded: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25 KJV); "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies; he that loveth his wife loveth himself" (Ephesians 5:28 KJV); "let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Ephesians 5.33 KJV) and, "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them" (Colossians 3:19 KJV).

First Peter 3:7 mandates that husbands live considerately with their wives and honor them. Ignatius requested Polycarp "to exhort my brethren, in the name of Jesus Christ, that they love their wives, even as they love the Church." In the A.D. 190s, Origen's teacher exhorted, "Let husbands love their wives as Christ also hath loved the church." In fact, according to Origen's teacher, a husband's trustworthiness, reliability, self-control and love of others that are to characterize a Christian's relations with outsiders are also to be exhibited to his wife. No loving husband turns his beloved wife into a subservient drudge. Indeed, said Origen, marriage should be the training-ground for developing and practicing love of neighbor.

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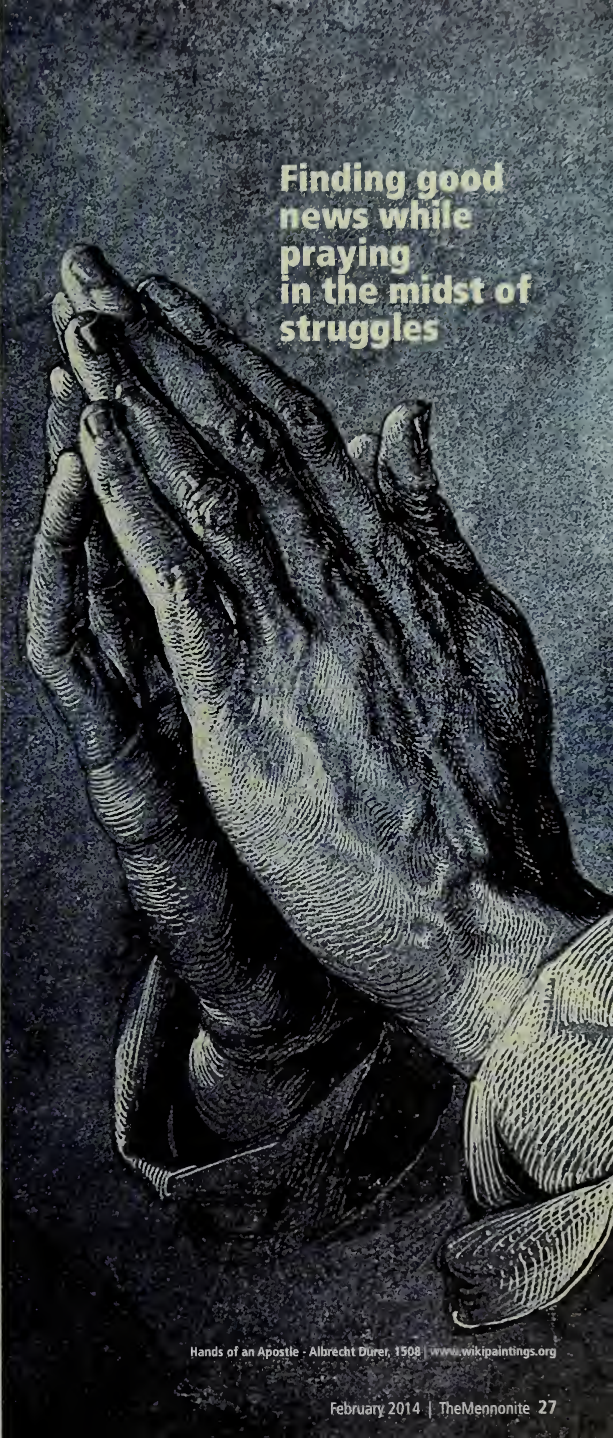
Praying hands clenched fists



Finding good news while praying in the midst of struggles

Hands of an Apostle - Albrecht Dürer, 1508 | www.wikipaintings.org

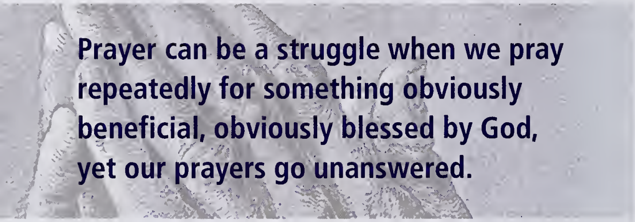
by Christine Guth

A pair of hands with palms pressed together has served as an image for prayer at least since the early 16th century when Albrecht Dürer created his well-known sketch. These days, Internet images of prayer may feature people in a reflective posture with palms pressed together while beams of light shine down from on high. Let's call this the praying hands image of prayer. ▶

In the introduction to the parable of the widow and the corrupt judge (Luke 18:1–8), Jesus tells us, “Pray always and don’t lose heart,” promising that God’s help is coming quickly. When life goes well, we find it easy to follow this advice. We pray, help comes, and we celebrate: The surgery was successful. Cancer is in remission. Praise God.

A problem arises when God’s help does not come quickly. We pray, and beams of light do not shine down from on high. Justice does not come. Injustice persists and spreads. Losing heart looks like realism. When life brings unrelenting struggles, if our understanding of prayer is too simple, we may lose heart and blame ourselves. Or we may conclude that God is absent or irrelevant.

An episode in Genesis (32:22–31) offers us one possible image of prayer robust enough to hold up to the struggles of real life. Jacob is poised to cross the ford of Jabbok on his way home to make peace with Esau, whom he swindled years ago. But he’s just learned that Esau is coming to meet him with 400 men. He sends his family on ahead with an enormous present for Esau, hoping the gift will persuade Esau and his men not to wipe out Jacob’s party. Jacob lingers behind, alone. Suddenly, without explanation, he is wrestling with a mysterious figure who seems to represent God. Jacob’s hip is dislocated in the all-night contest, and he walks away limping. His physical struggle offers us a metaphor for prayer.



Prayer can be a struggle when we pray repeatedly for something obviously beneficial, obviously blessed by God, yet our prayers go unanswered.

Luke’s parable about the widow and the judge offers another robust image of prayer. Even though the corrupt judge stands in sharp contrast with God, the widow’s persistent petitions serve as another metaphor for prayer. She keeps at it, begging for justice, despite refusals from the judge, who cares nothing about justice. She won’t give up. As Fred Craddock writes, the parable implies that prayer must be “continual and persistent, hurling its petitions against long periods of silence. … Until you have stood for years knocking at a locked door, your knuckles bleeding, you do not really know what prayer is” (*Luke: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Westminster John Knox, 1990).

As with Jacob, prayer is struggle, but here the image is boxing, a fact hidden by most English translations. When the judge finally gives in to the widow’s pleas, he says: “Because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out” (Luke 18:5). A literal translation of the Greek could be, “Because this widow continues to beat me, I will grant her justice, so she will not give me a black eye.” Let’s call this the clenched fists image of prayer.

Where is the good news in prayer as struggle? Without a vigorous image of prayer to guide us when life hammers us with one thing after another, we find our faith giving out. If the body of Christ puts forward an image of prayer that is too mild for the real-life struggles we face, we who are in the midst of hard times may feel that our anguish has no place in the faith community. We may be tempted to hide our pain, only adding to its depth.

Those facing mental health challenges are particularly vulnerable to feeling as though Christian faith has no place for us and our pain, but I suspect any difficult life circumstance can confront us with this feeling. Perhaps we live with a chronic illness. Perhaps we’ve prayed for a bully to stop picking on us, or for someone we love to stop making self-destructive choices. Perhaps we’re praying for world peace or for members of congress to work together. For any of us, prayer can be a struggle when we pray repeatedly for something obviously beneficial, obviously blessed by God, yet our prayers go unanswered.

A mother watches her 10-year-old child sink ever deeper into a depression that is making the whole family miserable and disrupting all semblance of normal life. She worships on Sunday morning, week after week, month after month, praying to God for relief. Years pass, and her child struggles on without any lasting relief. She hurls her petitions at God, who seems to reply with oppressive silence. She hangs on the edge of despair, nearly ready to give up on prayer and on God altogether. The mother’s mental health suffers. All the platitudes she has heard fall away. “God will not give you more than you can handle.” I am surely not handling this, she thinks. “God is punishing sin or teaching a lesson.” Whose sin? Surely not a child’s, and if I am the sinner, why punish an innocent child? The illness seems, if anything, to be driving her child away from healthy relationships, including a relationship with God and with the church.

Recognizing that prayer can include clenched fists as well as praying hands provides a way to hang on in the face of intense, persistent struggle. The stories of Jacob wrestling and the widow demanding justice tell us we shouldn't be surprised when chronic difficulties besiege us. Clearly, the biblical writers endured such struggle and left us stories we can identify with.

But is the good news in these Scriptures only that others have walked this road before? Must we hang on by our fingernails and wait for God to wound us like Jacob and leave us limping? A key piece to understanding the parable of the widow as good news lies in recognizing the community audience for which it was intended.

The social order of Jesus' time required that a woman have a man to speak for her in any public arena. Since the widow lacks a male defender, Justo González points out, "It is the responsibility of the entire people of God to care for her and to make certain that justice is done" (*Luke: Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible*, Westminster John Knox, 2010). The widow is not an individual begging in isolation for justice. She symbolizes an entire community, pleading with one voice that God's justice will prevail. Her story invites faith communities to enter into the struggle of those walking through difficult times. It urges us to unite in bringing our prayers to the throne of mercy, not giving up when answers are slow in coming.

When deep troubles shatter a sister or brother's capacity to pray, it is our job as the body of Christ to enter the struggle, walking side by side with them. We pray not only in words and quiet meditation but also through actions, embodying Christ to one another. We resist the whirlpool of dark despair that threatens to engulf those who struggle and unravel the easy answers and clichéd responses we have wrapped around our faith.

Families affected by mental illness and other troubles with no quick resolution need brothers and sisters in Christ to enter the abyss alongside us, to remain there as long as it takes, without trying to gloss over the hard times with platitudes. A small group listens with compassion and no judgment to unfolding stories of pain as a couple helplessly watches a loved one in a mental health crisis spiraling downward with self-destructive choices. The group seeks out ways to repair damaged relationships. The family knows God's presence through friends who show up with sleeves rolled up to pack boxes and clean filthy living quarters, haul mattresses, and give rides. They feel the love of Christ through strangers who provide shelter and a bed for their loved one. In these actions the Word becomes flesh—an essential part of praying together through struggle.

The community that embodies Christ in such situations creates safe spaces where those in pain can bare their souls, where praying with clenched fists is honored as a sign of a faith strong enough to bring doubt and demand to God. We pray with our sleeves rolled up, ready for the hard work of persistent companionship and practical support through adversity. Although the wrestling may leave us limping, like Jacob, we, too, demand a blessing. When it comes, the blessing takes us by surprise as we discover Christ among us, where two or three are gathered.

The parable of the widow concludes with a searching question: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" When we embrace both the joy and pain that come from struggles shared, we can rejoice that the Son of Man will find faith on earth, not hidden but in plain sight, embodied in the grace and care of brothers and sisters living in the redeemed community. For we are showing the world around us that love is possible, and here is what it looks like, as we wait in hope for the coming of Christ's reign in all its fullness.

When deep troubles shatter a sister or brother's capacity to pray, it is our job as the body of Christ to enter the struggle, walking side by side with them.

Christine Guth is program director for the Anabaptist Disability Network in Elkhart, Ind. This article is adapted from a sermon she preached at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., on Oct. 20, 2013.

Why I don't tweet

Russ Eanes of Harrisonburg, Va., is executive director of MennoMedia.

All of humanity's problems stem from man's inability to sit quietly in a room alone.—Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*

I wonder what Pascal would have thought about Twitter. His Pensées or "thoughts," many of which are short enough to be tweets (140 characters maximum) were his religious and philosophical musings about the meaning of life and religion, a first draft of what was to become his own apologetic on the Christian faith. He died in 1662, seven years before they were published and printed on a press, using a process that had not changed much in the more than 200 years since Gutenberg invented movable-type printing.

Today they might have been only a drop in the ocean of the Information Age. I frequently muse to myself and others about our future in the age of the Internet, social media and digital information.

I found out recently that Twitter has over 1 billion registered users worldwide, about 230 million of which are active. Approximately 500 million tweets are made per day, averaging 5,700 per second. Over 300 billion have been made since the first tweet was sent in March of 2006. Katy Perry, Justin Beiber, Lady Gaga and President Barack Obama all have more than 40 million followers; the top 25, with the exception of the President and YouTube, Instagram and Twitter itself, are all entertainers.

I don't use Twitter, but I'm occasionally active on Facebook. I still can't get over the idea that it feels like I'm only on it because I'm bored. It reminds me of its early days—maybe seven years ago—back when high school students still weren't allowed to have Facebook pages—and they were using Myspace. My then-teenage children and some friends were sitting on our front porch, discussing whether it had any merits or virtues. One of the neighbor kids, probably 16, said, "Yeah, I come home after school and go online right away. I'm looking to see who else doesn't have a life."

How times have changed. Now, not being on social media is almost akin to not having an existence. Not only are virtually all teens on some form of social media, they are watching it all the time, in school or elsewhere. It pervades their existence. Even Baby Boomers, who came into social media in its second wave, have adopted it wholeheartedly. All this has happened rapidly and with minimal discernment as individuals, families and faith communities.

But the question still nags: Do those people (including me) have a life? For publishing colleagues, I might as well not exist if I don't tweet.

My response is that I don't because there's just too much information to process already. Theologian Walter Brueggemann says, "Our lives are occupied territory / occupied by a cacophony of voices / and the din overwhelms us."

Often my hesitation to create more content (such as this article) is that I hesitate to add to that "din." Given my own sense of being overwhelmed, I also wonder if others are able to process or ponder what they "consume" each day through various media.

Not only are we deluged with information —or with ways of sharing it with each other— we're having a harder time just sitting quietly in a room alone. Along with our overdoses of screens and media, we are losing solitude, quiet and deep thought. Sitting quietly, using that time to read, think, meditate and pray, may be a dying faith discipline. How will we train and practice this discipline in an always-connected age?

Further, the digital age, which depends on electronic devices that become obsolete before they outlive their usefulness, also breeds a lack of a sense of permanence. This is paradoxical, given that social media is so hard to delete.

One final thought, or pensée: As the amount of information available to us becomes virtually unlimited, it's becoming less and less meaningful. Facebook alone stores 300 petabytes of information. A petabyte is one quadrillion bytes, a number so large as to be nearly inconceivable, and thus meaningless, except to marketers, who are able to measure, sort and process our digital lives into algorithms that target our personal consumption. In the midst of updating our Facebook status, are we able to ponder all the consequences of our digital age? In the future, how will we know what is most important to give our attention to? Will we be able sift through the din to see or hear what we need most? As people of faith, will we be able to discern as a community—not just as individuals—the most important questions confronting us? Or will we just sit back and wait to react to the latest tweet or status update? TM

Sitting quietly, using that time to read, think, meditate and pray, may be a dying faith discipline.

Go to a church you want to leave (and stay)

We are all impacted by the forces of consumer capitalism. These forces help us grow comfortable being selfish. These forces help us grow comfortable discarding old things in favor of new. These forces help us grow comfortable being disconnected from the relational consequences of being selfish, discarding old things and choosing new ones.

Nowhere is this more obvious to me than in the American church. The primary metaphor for selecting and joining a Christian community these days is shopping. People leave church A for church B for reasons that used to be reserved for choosing Walmart over Target or Sears over JC Penny. And they have been shaped to believe that this is OK—good even—because they have needs that must be met.

As a pastor, I see this all the time. Sometimes it is when people leave our community and go to another one. Other times it is when people leave another community and come to ours. Every time, there are broken relationships that often go unattended. Why is that? Why do people think their presence, and lack of presence, doesn't matter to a community? I think it is because we have been taught that church is an institution and that our primary mode of living is as consumers.

Consumer culture has shaped us into toddlers, not fully grown and mature adults.

Do you think Walmart cares if you start shopping at Target? They do, because they want your money. But do you think Candice at check out counter #11 misses Michael Danner? I doubt it. Do you think Donna the store manager grieves your absence and wonders what she may have done to push you away? Nope. Do you think John the stock clerk feels rejected because for years he has stocked those shelves so you could have what you needed when you needed it and now you just walked away? I hardly think so.

But this is what happens in the church. It happens because the church is not an institution, it is a community. And it happens because there is no metaphor more ill-fitting and devastating for a community than shopping. The church is people and relationships and connections and mutual support and encouragement and on and on and on.

Paul uses two metaphors for talking about the church that help illuminate my point. One is the church as a body. The other is the church as the bride of Jesus. When you are talking about a body and a marriage, separation takes on a whole new meaning. It takes on the meaning of amputation and dismemberment. It takes on the meaning of divorce and all the attendant pain.

Somehow we have to replace the metaphor of shopping with the metaphor of body and marriage. We need to do this for at least three reasons:

1. As followers of Jesus we need to be formed by his image and likeness and not that of consumer culture. We are more than autonomous buying units. We have more to offer each other and the world than what is in our bank accounts.
2. As followers of Jesus we need to be aware of how our actions impact others in the church, and we need to choose Philippians 2 over our own self-interest.
3. As followers of Jesus we don't grow in maturity by leaving difficult environments and relationships. It's only as we stay put that we learn what it means to love another like Jesus loves us, to forgive another like Jesus forgives us, to be forgiven by another when we've done something stupid, to extend grace others don't deserve and to receive grace we don't deserve.

The long and short of it is this: Consumer culture has shaped us into toddlers, not fully grown and mature adults. In order to grow in maturity, you need to put down roots. The roots you put down in a church community are not the same as brand loyalty in the marketplace. They are deeper than that and require more of you. Too many people assume there are no consequences to church shopping. There are, and they don't just affect the church communities people are leaving. They impact all church communities for this reason: They fundamentally redefine what it means to be church. If we can't trust one another in the church community, then there is no basis upon which to build relationships built upon mutual accountability and mutual love. TM

Michael Danner is lead pastor of Metamora (Ill.) Mennonite Church.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Conference to license pastor in same-sex relationship

Mountain States Mennonite Conference first conference to make this decision

In December 2013, the leadership board of the Mountain States Mennonite Conference (MSMC) made the decision to license Theda Good for continuing ministry at First Mennonite Church, Denver.

MSMC is the first conference to license an individual in an open, committed same-sex relationship.

This unanimous decision came after a recommendation of the conference ministerial council.

The year-long process centered on the consideration of Good, who is in a committed same-sex relationship, which is at variance with denominational statements. The discernment was also based on whether Good had a call and the skills and gifts for ministry.

This news was announced in a Dec. 23, 2013, press release from the conference.

Good has been serving as a pastor at First Mennonite Church for more than a year and is a member of First Mennonite.

According to the release: "[The process] included the normal credentialing interview, many formal and informal consultations and a series of four listening meetings across the conference in which delegates from all the MSMC churches were invited to come and worship and speak and eat together. In addition there was significant input from many people of differing perspectives across Mennonite Church USA."

Theda Good

Nancy Kauffmann, denominational minister, relates to MSMC. "Although some disagree, they did process [this decision] very carefully and tried to be as respectful as they could. They tried to lean into what God might be leading them to do," she said in a Jan. 7 interview.

Kauffmann said her role in this process was to ask questions, encourage those involved to read various documents and to think about the broad implications of this decision.

She said a significant part of this process for MSMC and the whole church is prayer and asking God to show the next steps.

Herm Weaver, MSMC conference minister, described the process as "careful" and "long."

We tried to give delegates from each of the MSMC churches an opportunity to speak into the process, he said in a Jan. 8 interview.

"It's always tough because you hear things all over the spectrum," he said. "In the end, a decision has to be made, and some people will feel like they haven't been heard, even if they were heard."

According to the membership guidelines approved in 2001, Mennonite Church USA has the authority to implement the process whereby area conferences join or leave as member conferences. MSMC, as part of Mennonite Church USA, has adopted the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, which states: "We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life." (The guidelines are available at www.mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/MembershipGuidelines_2013_July.pdf).

However, Kauffmann said she has not heard individuals ask that MSMC be disciplined or asked to leave. "The thing I hear is individuals asking what Mennonite Church USA's official response regarding this action is," she said.

The individuals are also asking themselves if they can still be part of Mennonite Church USA after this decision, she said.

Weaver said many of the responses have been from individuals with views on opposite ends of the spectrum.

"We spend much of our energy paying attention to the edges of the continuum," he said, "while there's a large group of folks in the center who don't have certainty on this question but are open to God's Spirit and are looking to see what God is doing here."

Phil Rosenberger, pastor of Light of Life Church in Farmington, N.M., wrote in a Dec. 26, 2013, email to *The Mennonite* that not all MSMC churches agree with the board's decision to license Good. He included his letter to the MSMC board requesting that the board withdraw its decision to license Good.

Rosenberger's letter (see page 5) included two reasons he objects to the decision. First, he stated that licensing Good violates MSMC and Mennonite Church USA bylaws. Second, he states that the decision contradicts Scripture.

MSMC representatives will meet with representatives of Mennonite Church USA Executive Board in January to discuss the process and implications for the broader church.

This information went out to conference leaders and pastors in an email from Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, on Jan. 6. The Executive Committee will then meet at the end of January to prepare for the Executive Board meeting Feb.13-15. Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., representatives will also meet with the Executive Board representatives regarding its announcement to re-evaluate its policy on hiring of noncelibate lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals (see the January 2013 issue, page 35).—*Anna Groff*

Ohio couple pledges $100,000 for *Shine*

Family grew up on Mennonite Christian education materials

MennoMedia, which produces Sunday school curriculum to help children form an Anabaptist faith, recently received a $25,000 donation and a pledge of an additional $75,000 to help fund the new curriculum development now underway for MennoMedia and Brethren Press.

The gift came from Ed and Carol Nofziger of Archbold, Ohio, who have been Sunday school teachers and whose children and grandchildren have grown up using denominational materials.

They have used the *Foundation Series*, *Jubilee!* and, most recently, *Gather 'Round*.

The Nofzigers say they feel it is important that children "learn God's truths as well as the Anabaptist faith," they said in response to being asked what motivated them to make this donation and pledge. "We trust MennoMedia to produce the materials Sunday school teachers need in their important faith formation ministry."

The current Sunday school materials, *Gather 'Round*, are in the final year of an eight-year cycle.

The new Anabaptist curriculum, *Shine: Living in God's Light*, planned in cooperation with Brethren Press, will be released this fall.

Shine On: A Story Bible accompanies the Sunday school curriculum and will be available in English and Spanish. (There are plans to translate it into other languages as well, pending funding.)

Although written for a Mennonite audience, these materials also target those outside Anabaptist circles who value the biblical themes of peace, justice and community.

Rachel Sciretti, a leader in the Freemason Street Baptist Church in Norfolk, Va., says that she and others in her congregation who have been teachers for more than 30 years thought they had seen every possible way to tell the Bible story.

"But *Gather 'Round* tells the Bible story in a fresh and exciting new way," writes Sciretti. "Our teachers love it and come away feeling refreshed. The perspectives from the stories are right in line with our way of thinking. We are so happy to have found this curriculum."

Sciretti indicates that she will check out the new Shine curriculum and website [www.ShineCurriculum.com].

"If it is as good as *Gather 'Round*, we will definitely be using it," she writes.

In 2012, MennoMedia, the publishing agency of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, embarked on a campaign to raise the $400,000 up-front funds needed for a small publisher to produce these materials for children.

During the first 15 months of the campaign, they raised more than $250,000 in cash and pledges, including $10,096 from a special offering at the Mennonite Church USA biennial convention in Phoenix, and $10,000 from Mennonite Church Canada's Formation Council.

Shine On
A Story Bible

The new Anabaptist curriculum, *Shine: Living in God's Light*, planned in cooperation with Brethren Press, will be released this fall.

Steve Carpenter, MennoMedia's director of development, has visited nearly all the 50 largest users of the *Gather 'Round* curriculum in the United States and the 33 heaviest users in Canada.

"Ed and Carol's gift was a tremendous encouragement and vote of confidence for all of us at MennoMedia," says Carpenter.

He goes on to say, "I love Lori Guenther Reesor's description of fund-raising. She says it is 'the joyful and holy task of telling people about the garden and inviting them to water it.' "

Ed and Carol have watered the garden, says Carpenter, quoting the Nofzigers as saying, "In all areas of life we like to remember to 'make a difference' while we have this short span of time during our lives on earth."—*MennoMedia staff*

Young adult leaders emerge

This year welcomes two executive directors under age 40.

This year welcomes several new young leaders in the Mennonite world. In 2014, Sarah Thompson will lead Christian Peacemaker Teams as the new executive director. Aaron Kauffman becomes president of Virginia Mennonite Missions. Jenna Martin Liechty begins as director of Camp Friedenswald in Cassopolis, Mich. This author begins as interim editor of *The Mennonite* Feb. 1.

These leaders join many other young adults—those named below and others—with significant roles in Mennonite Church USA and beyond.

After working as convention planner for Phoenix 2013, Hannah Heinzekehr moved into the position of director of communication and marketing for Mennonite Church USA. Joanna Shenk works as associate for interchurch relations and communications. Hilary J. Scarsella is the Women in Leadership Project co-coordinator and associate for transformative peacemaking. Rachel S. Gerber is the half-time denominational minister for youth and young adults.

In Mennonite Education Agency, young people also carry significant roles. Marathana Prothro is director of marketing and communications at Hesston (Kan.) College. Rachel Swartzendruber Miller is vice president of admissions at Hesston (Kan.) College. In the high schools, Bethany Shue Nussbaum is advancement director of Central Christian School, Kidron, Ohio. Jon Heinly serves as conference youth minister for Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference, as well as a writer for the New Voices column in *The Mennonite*.

A Mennonite Mission Network release in September 2013 also highlighted this phenomenon of Millennial (those born after 1980) involvement and leadership. Brady Peters is an associate with church relations. Sara Alvarez is an editor in the marketing and communication department. Jolene VonGunten is the Christian service assistant for the SOOP and Youth Venture programs and for recruitment. Neil Richer is the assistant director for Mennonite Voluntary Service. Matthew Lehman is development associate for Mission Network.

Finally, Erica Littlewolf directs the Indigenous Vision Center for Mennonite Central Committee Central States. Michael Yoder began as executive director of Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mt. Pleasant, Pa., in May 2013. Sherah-Leigh Zehr Gerber is the new director of advancement for Virginia Mennonite Missions—beginning in March. —*Anna Groff*

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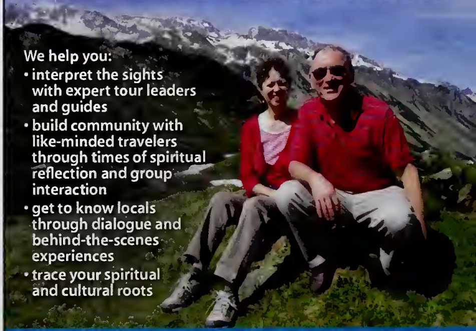

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Students connect in mentoring program

New student-led initiative at Goshen College is called Campus Connections.

Eva Lapp and Brynn Godshall have a lot in common: they both sing in the Women's World Music Choir at Goshen (Ind.) College, love ice cream and share a passion for peace studies.

But Lapp, a junior from Goshen, and Godshall, a freshman from Lancaster, Pa., might never have become friends if not for a new student-led initiative called Campus Connections.

Last September, the student senate launched a peer-to-peer mentoring program designed to build bridges between upperclassmen and underclassmen on campus. The idea emerged during conversations about social divisions with Jan Zawadzki, a German international student who graduated in April.

Zawadski's vision for a more integrated student body prompted student leaders Hans Weaver, a 2013 graduate from New Holland, Pa., and David Zehr, a sophomore from Elkhart, Ind., to brainstorm ways to bring diverse students together.

"We were getting this not from just one corner of the campus but from a lot of different groups," says Zehr. "There was a sense of wanting to connect with different people—getting past some of the barriers and misunderstandings on campus."

From there, Campus Connections was born.

The aim of the program, says Weaver, is to get students out of their normal social circles by pairing them with peers they might not otherwise have a chance to meet—specifically, students in different classes.

First-year students are partnered with juniors, while sophomores are matched with seniors.

The Campus Connections leaders initially hoped that 30 students would sign up for the budding program.

To their surprise, more than 100 came to the first meeting. That week, a committee of students used surveys and their personal knowledge of individuals to match people they thought would be compatible.

Once students were paired up, they were encouraged to meet with their partners throughout the semester to grab coffee together, attend a Maple Leafs soccer game or just say hi in the hallway. Each pair was left to determine when and how they would meet.

For Lapp and Godshall's first meeting, they agreed to meet together in Lapp's campus apartment.

The two women talked about their families, classes and interests and quickly discovered they had a lot in common.

In the following months, Lapp and Godshall met for lunch and chatted whenever they ran into each other at choir practice or around campus.

"It is nice to have another good connection on campus that I can send random mail to, or hug or just say hello to as we pass on the sidewalk," says Lapp.

Both say they benefitted from hearing the perspective of someone in a different class.

The partners were encouraged to take a photo and submit their photos for a raffle drawing. By early December 2013, Campus Connections had collected more than 90 photos.

"The most rewarding part was making a friend who is so comfortable with the campus that she provided lots of helpful tips and information that I wouldn't have gotten from my freshman friends," says Godshall. "She actually introduced me to the world of peace, justice and conflict studies, which is now my major."

Lapp and Godshall had no trouble connecting with each other, but the leaders of Campus Connections weren't sure all the pairings would work out so well.

To create a little incentive, the program gave each participant one free drink at Java Junction, the college's on-campus coffee shop—but only if they went with their partner.

The pairs were also encouraged to take a photo together every time they hung out and submit their photos for a raffle drawing.

By early December 2013, Zehr had collected more than 90 photos of students eating together in the dining hall, smiling over lattes, working out in the Recreation-Fitness Center—even canoeing together.

From the photo submissions, several students were randomly selected to win a gift certificate to a local restaurant of their choice.

A recent survey and conversations with participants confirmed that many partners met on a semiregular basis or at least felt happy that they got to know someone new.

"If a couple of pairings go really well, if there are some great bridges built, some great social groups breaking through and some new ones created, we'll be extremely happy," Weaver says.—*Ariel Ropp for Goshen College*

God's house is everywhere

These congregations do not meet in a typical church sanctuary.

Instead of sitting in pews, one bright Sunday last October, about 20 members of Lamorlaye Mennonite Church, north of Paris, headed for the lake.

As they strolled by the lapping waters, surrounded by oak and beech trees, the worshipers stopped to study the life-giving structure of the tree roots.

"[The trees' root systems] led us to consider the role and importance of the roots of our spiritual lives," said Linda Oyer, who led the service that Sunday and heard of the idea of a "walking church" from the London Mennonite Center. She was sent by Mennonite Mission Network to teach and write from an Anabaptist perspective, in partnership with different French organizations.

Oyer structured her congregation's walk around the passage from Jeremiah 17:7-8, which compares the faithful to a tree growing along a riverbank. It likens the hope and confidence that we get from our faith to the life-giving sustenance that trees get from their deep roots, which keep them alive through droughts.

"It's one thing to hear the words of the text of Jeremiah inside a room of pew seats, but it's another to see, touch and smell the roots of the tree as they reach toward the water," said Oyer.

This special Sunday was one way congregations praise God in places other than a church sanctuary. Mennonite Mission Network personnel and partners receive new insights on worship when they pray and praise God in unusual places.

Raleigh (N.C.) Mennonite Church chose to put its resources into the community instead of toward a church building. This host congregation for a Service Adventure unit meets at Hope Elementary Charter School, which also houses other community organizations, like The Encouraging Place, a women's ministry that brings women together for support groups, retreats and camps. Members of the congregation volunteer and some have worked with the organizations that use the building.

"When Raleigh Mennonite Church began about 27 years ago, we made the intentional decision not to put a lot of money into a building infrastructure," says Stan Martin, the Service Adventure support committee chair. "We wanted to focus on being a part of the community. The sentiment was strong enough that it was articulated in our core-values statements that were adopted a number of years ago."

The Iglesia Menonita Natanael congregation in Uruguay bought some land in 1991, where they posted a tent to worship under. When the tent broke, the congregation got creative and bought a broken-down bus.

Maruja Giribone, the pastor of Iglesia Menonita Natanael in Uruguay, and her husband, Luis Alberto Cipriani, sit on the bus seats in their church's sanctuary. The seats remind the congregation of the three years they worshiped in a bus while they constructed their building.

They put curtains along the windows and sat in their "pews" facing the driver's spot. The church used the bus for about three years as they constructed their building.

Now, a pair of bus seats remains in the sanctuary to remind them of their early church life.

"You could say it was strange, but it was nice," says Maruja Giribone, the pastor at the church. "We like to remember the experience because, although it was hard to invite other people to worship with us, we had lots of faith in the church."

Mary Raber, who serves with Mennonite Mission Network and teaches at Odessa Theological Seminary in Ukraine, writes that some Protestant congregations organized since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 do not have their own buildings.

She attends Trinity Baptist Church, which meets in the lecture hall of the local Society for the Visually Impaired. Since the building is designed for people who can't see well, there are special features, such as a contrasting light brick pathway. The church contributes to the society by doing some janitorial work and sponsoring a 10-day camp for visually impaired adults.

Janie Blough, a Mennonite Mission Network worker who serves at the Paris Mennonite Center and is also a doctoral candidate in worship studies, says that it isn't foreign to Anabaptist congregations to worship in unusual spaces. In the denomination's early history, they were often persecuted and had to meet in secret. This made them focus on the essentials of worship: building relationships with God and one another.—*Sara Alvarez of Mennonite Mission Network*

Flooding worsens Gazans' plight

MCC responds to flooding in an area with a population struggling to survive.

Ryan Rodrick Beiler

A week after torrential rains caused floodwaters to reach about 12 feet, Palestinians use fishing boats to assist residents in retrieving belongings from homes along flooded streets in the Al Nafaq section of Gaza City, on Dec. 18, 2013. Gazans, including MCC partners, maintain that the flooding was compounded by the release of dams across the border in Israel.

A week after torrential, cold rain battered the Gaza Strip, people in the al Nafaq Street area of eastern Gaza City are still struggling to clean mud and debris out of homes and businesses.

Floodwaters that initially swelled to 12 feet within 12 hours on al Nafaq Street on Dec. 11 and 12, 2013, have receded to about six feet of sewage-contaminated water on sections of the street. The flooding caused 400 households to lose everything, and about 100 people were hospitalized because of frostbite or upper respiratory infections.

Using small fishing vessels and various makeshift boats, dozens of community people helped each other clean out street-level homes and salvage items from homes and shops. Walking is restricted to narrow stretches of mud and sand along the flooded roads.

As day fades to night, cleanup efforts are replaced by the noise of multiple generators on nearly every block, as electricity is scarce, and temperatures consistently dip into the 40s.

Al Najd Development Forum, a Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) partner, responded quickly to the need by providing clothes and food rations. MCC now is funding a continued distribution of these items as well as household and kitchen supplies to 100 families in various locations in Gaza, including eastern Gaza City. An MCC team was in Gaza Dec. 18 to assess the situation.

In the broader Gaza Strip, the flooding forced 40,000 residents to flee their homes, and 100,000 people have lost production of their agricultural land. Most people sought shelter with family or in public buildings such as schools.

The United Nations declared Gaza "a disaster area" on Dec. 14.

Khalid Abu Sharekh, chairperson of Al Najd, says the flooding was disastrous, but its effect was much worse because Gazans were already in survival mode because of the Israeli occupation.

"The occupation has meant a lack of income for people, and that makes this natural disaster a catastrophe," he says, referring to Israel's control of supplies and people in and out of Gaza.

Even before the flooding, unemployment, poor health care, lack of education and stressed agriculture were major issues in Gaza, says Dan Bergen, MCC representative in Palestine and Israel with his spouse, Joanna Hiebert Bergen. They are from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Gaza's 1.8 million people have endured daily 12-hour blackouts since the lone power plant was switched off last November due to a fuel shortage. Israel limits fuels and other supplies that get into Gaza, and within the past year, Egypt has closed tunnels that for many years were used to bring fuel and supplies into Gaza and to send exports out.

On Dec. 13, Israel opened a crossing with Gaza, allowing fuel supplies and four water pumps to enter to help relieve the effects of the flooding. However, many Gazans, including MCC partners, maintain that Israel worsened the flooding by opening dams east of Gaza.—*Sheldon C. Good for MCC*

Sustaining the church through sustainable agriculture

Five MWC member churches work to equip people to meet their basic needs.

Five Mennonite World Conference member churches recently collaborated on a project intended to build self-sustainable church programs within African Mennonite communities.

Communauté Evangélique Mennonite (Evangelical Mennonite Church) of DR Congo and Église Évangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso (Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso) partnered with Mennonite Church Canada, the Evangelical Mennonite Conference (Canada), and Association des Églises Évangéliques Mennonite de France (French Mennonite Church) to send two African Mennonite young people for training in entrepreneurship and small-scale agriculture.

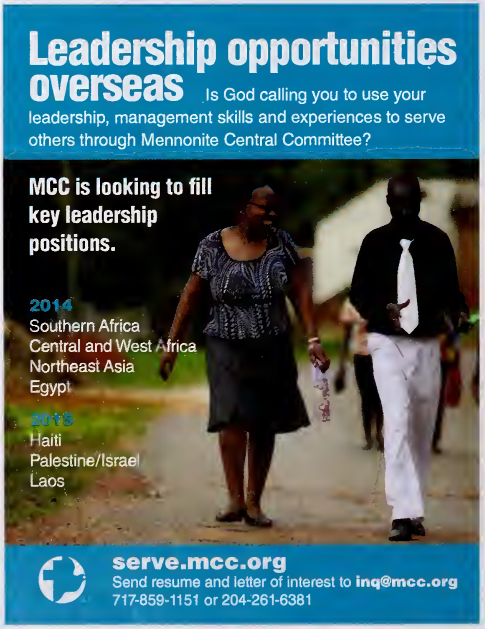
Other project partners included Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission and Mennonite Mission Network.

Jean Mbuabua from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Arouna Sourabie from Burkina Faso were selected by their respective national Mennonite churches as the recipients for this program. Together, they will receive necessary training at the Songhaï Center in Porto Novo, the capital city of Benin.

The Songhaï Centre is a zero emissions-model research farm that also educates students in ecologically sustainable farming practices in the context of an African environment. The center is gaining worldwide recognition for its advances in ecologically sustainable agriculture in the African context. Songhaï specializes in training young agricultural entrepreneurs and equips them to embrace new sustainable economic opportunities using natural resources that are found in their own communities in Africa.

At the end of their training, Mbuabua and Sourabie will return to their home countries to launch small-scale farming activities. Their new skills will help them earn an income for themselves and for their church programs. They will also train others who can then carry on this work elsewhere.

"This program has enormous potential for everyone involved," says Hippolyto Tshimanga, Mennonite Church Canada director for Africa Ministry. "The best way [to build the global church] is to equip people to meet their basic needs and the needs of their local congregations." This program, he hopes, will do just that.—*Adapted from a Mennonite Church Canada news release by Deborah Froese*



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Global North learns from Global South partners

International Missions Association shares highlights.

President Nelson Okanya and others from Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) found themselves celebrating the growth of and learning from Global South mission partners at the annual meeting of the International Missions Association (IMA), a group of 22 Anabaptist mission groups, held Aug. 26-Sept. 2, 2013, in Singapore.

Asia Pacific Mission (APM), based in Singapore, hosted the annual week-long IMA gathering. "APM's level of sacrificial commitment to spread the gospel was inspiring," says Antonio Ulloa, EMM's church revitalization coach. "Tan Kok Beng [chief executive officer of APM and chair of Mennonite Church Singapore] has a single-minded focus to provide missionaries for the 10/40 window [a geographical area extending from West Africa to East Asia, between 10 and 40 degrees north of the Equator]."

Darrel Hostetter, EMM human resources director, interviewed 12 partners from the IMA during the week about how they care for the missionaries they send out.

"Some partners have incorporated member care deep into their DNA. They have been good at connecting workers with the local churches," Hostetter says.

Javier Soler

Yemiru Tilahun, director of missions and evangelism for Meserete Kristos Church of Ethiopia, Nelson Okanya, president of Eastern Mennonite Missions in the United States, and Amos Stoltzfus, partnership coach for EMM, huddle for prayer and conversation at the IMA meetings in Singapore.

Highlights shared by Global South IMA members included Amor Viviente reporting that they have three missionaries working alongside EMM workers in Asia and have started five churches in Costa Rica and Spain, with plans to enter Italy. They also plan to send a worker to Kenya in collaboration with EMM.

One of the Mennonite groups from Indonesia shared about its growing vision to engage its Muslim neighbors. Last year, a new believer in its circle of churches was killed for his faith. Since then, many young people are praying and following Jesus more seriously.

Henry Mulandi of African Christian Mission International in Kenya reported that a member of his Kenyan network planted a church in Reading, England.

The EMM ministry in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, provides dormitories as a place of Christian witness for rural students studying in the city.

The IMA was founded by EMM, Amor Viviente of Honduras, Meserete Kristos Church of Ethiopia, and PIPKA of Indonesia in 1997. Members partner through prayer, mutual support and international mission teams. Of the 22 mission groups now part of IMA, seven are from Africa, six from Asia, five from North America and four from Latin America. Some are from member churches of Mennonite World Conference. Others are not.—*Linda Moffett of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

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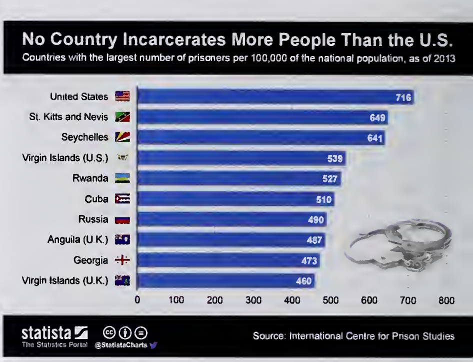
Our prison system is toxic

Churches can be trailblazers and demonstrate a better way.


No Country Incarcerates More People Than the U.S.

Countries with the largest number of prisoners per 100,000 of the national population, as of 2013

Source: International Centre for Prison Studies

Prominent Republicans Newt Gingrich and Rand Paul, as well as prominent Democrats Pat Leahy and Andrew Cuomo, don't agree on much. But they and many others from both parties favor reforming a costly, ineffective prison system. Twenty-seven states are already taking steps to change things.

The phrase, "broken system" is now used by both Republicans and Democrats, who look at the waste of dollars and human lives.

This "system" is also a threat to public safety. Some 700,000 offenders re-enter society each year, many with untreated addictions and formidable barriers to housing, food stamps, social services and employment. Often overlooked are the more than 5 million on probation or parole, "supervised" by overloaded case workers and subject to arrest for serious or technical violations.

Estimates of incarcerated people number from 2 million to 2.5 million. We are the world's leading jailor. Our incarceration rate is eight times that of Germany. Thirty years ago, we locked up 300,000.

Estimates of incarcerated people number from 2 million to 2.5 million, at an estimated cost of more than $50 billion per year.

An estimate of cost is more than $50 billion per year. Annual costs of individual incarceration in the states ranges from $38,000 to $100,000 per year. Not calculated is the loss of wages during prison time and the costs, both human and financial, to families.

In order to address the waste of dollars and the wreckage in lives, it is helpful to look back on how we have lost our way.

Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New Press, 2010) provides a carefully documented account of how both political parties discovered the power of fear-mongering directed at drug crimes among minorities in order to gain political advantage. The following references rely substantially on her account.

President Richard Nixon first used the phrase "war on drugs." During his southern strategy campaign he cleverly spoke in code words that evoked fear of minorities. When he saw one of his ads that avoided the word race but spoke against violent crime, he said privately that "that hits it right on the nose. It's all about those damn Negro-Puerto Rican groups out there."

President Ronald Reagan declared a "war on drugs" in 1982 and went much further in reallocating tax dollars. FBI anti-drug funding in 1984 went from $8 million to $95 million. Later Department of Defense antidrug spending went from $33 million to $1.042 billion. Spending for drug treatment, prevention and education was dramatically reduced to about one-fifth of the previous level.

Reagan was even more effective in mobilizing fear as a political tactic. He hired public relations expert Robert Stutzman to give the media hundreds of dramatic stories of "crack babies." *Newsweek* and others picked up the theme and declared crack to be the "biggest story since Vietnam/Watergate." *Time* called it "the issue of the year."

Not to be outdone in the race to be the toughest on crime, Congress in 1988 authorized public housing to evict drug offenders and to deny student loans to drug offenders. It began the practice of mandatory minimums even for first offenders.

The first President Bush found himself running seriously behind in his presidential campaign. He hired Lee Atwater for advertising and devised a winner. It featured a black person on parole who had committed rape and murder. He described Mr. Dukakis as "soft on crime." Later, facing an inoperable brain tumor, Atwater apologized to Dukakis for the "naked cruelty" of his campaign ad.

Candidate Bill Clinton correctly perceived that to win the election he would need to change the left-wing image of the Democrats. He famously moved himself and his party to the political center. He saw that fear-mongering worked for the Republicans, and he did not hesitate to use it for his advantage. Alexander notes that Clinton "vowed that he would never permit any Republican to be perceived as tougher on crime than he."

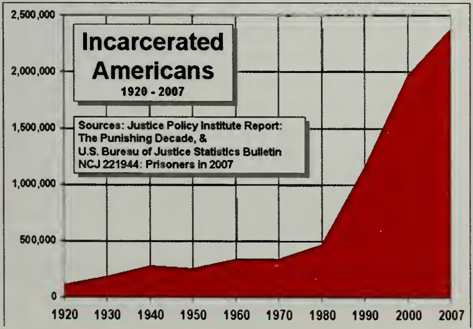
He advocated the "three strikes and you're out" crime bill, meaning that the third offense, however small, could get you serious time in prison. His administration added more people to the federal and state prison system than any in history. Drug offenders were denied public housing. He cut Pell Grants out of prison education programs, making re-entry more difficult.

Barack Obama did not inflame with anti-crime political rhetoric. He supported the current Attorney General's elimination of mandatory minimum sentences in the federal system. However, President Obama has not addressed the ravages of existing mass incarceration. Homeland Security holds thousands of illegal immigrants in detention centers, sometimes for years, often separated from families. His ratio of spending on drug treatment as opposed to spending on law enforcement is worse than that of President George W. Bush.

In summary, it is clear that fear focused on the criminal offender is a potent political tool. An unintended consequence of this tactic was to create a widespread fear and loathing of millions of incarcerated, paroled and formerly convicted people. In a monthly gathering of law enforcement, probation, jail ministry, church representatives, housing and jobs people guided by our Elkhart (Ind.) County Sheriff Brad Rogers, the issue of stigma comes up frequently. We may not have thought about how much the rough and tumble of partisan politics has formed public attitudes toward all offenders.

As I have reviewed the costs and consequences of mass incarceration, I have come to believe that the phrase "broken system" does not go deep enough to describe our national problem.

We can better compare our prison system to hospitals in Vienna in the mid-19th century. It was before Louis Pasteur taught about germs. Doctors who had just worked on cadavers then went to help mothers deliver babies. The rate of puerperal fever that resulted in death was sometimes as high as 35 percent. Dr. Ignaz Semmelweis did careful observations and proposed that doctors wash their hands with disinfectant before delivering babies. Deaths plunged to below 1 percent. However, his recommendations were considered insulting to doctors. His ideas were largely rejected in his lifetime, and he died in an asylum at age 42, muttering "but the babies did not die." Following the hospital metaphor, we would better describe our current prison system not as a broken system but as a toxic system.



Spending so much on enforcement and prisons has led to cutbacks in positive programs within the buildings. We have powerful barriers to re-entry that aggravate our crime problems.

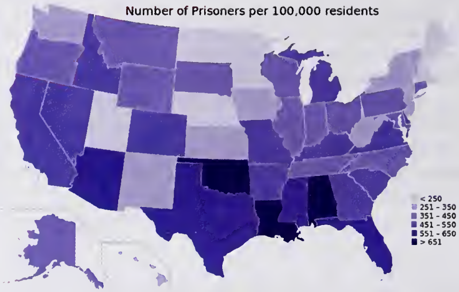
Spending so much on enforcement and prisons has led to cutbacks in positive programs within the buildings. College courses were once commonplace but are now rare. In many prisons there is now only a modest place for GED programs, short-term social skills programs, some addiction programs and religious programming. PLUS programs teach character and moral development and lead to small-time cuts in sentences but carry no college credit.

We have powerful barriers to re-entry that aggravate our crime problems. Felons are legally excluded from banking and some health-care jobs and often automatically excluded from online applications. There is a shortage of affordable housing. Some released prisoners come out with untreated addictions and/or mental illness. One study indicates that more people re-enter the system after previous incarceration than the number of first offenders. Neglect is a set-up for failure.

In addition to fear, we must also deal with greed.

Private prisons for profit is a new American industry. Don Cohen reported in a recent *Huffington Post* that the Corrections Corporation of America sent a letter to 48 governors that offered a 20-year contract to buy and operate their prisons. But there was one catch: They needed to guarantee a 90 percent occupancy rate for all 20 years. If they missed the target, the contract provided for the state to pay the corporation for unused beds. In effect this would be a "low-crime tax" for the taxpayers. There were no takers, but some states had signed earlier contracts with such quotas. Arizona had guaranteed 100 percent.

We have a huge problem that has been building for decades, but this is not a time for discouragement. Dozens of states are making more use of alternatives to jails and prisons, such as work release and community service. Men-



nonite Howard Zehr has made a national and international contribution with programs of restorative justice, alternatives to incarceration. Some 20 states have reformed their mandatory sentencing laws.

What resources can we bring as people of faith? We don't think of the Bible as a book about crime and incarceration, but it is noteworthy that the two greatest figures of the Old Testament, Moses and David, were both redeemed murderers. We might even think of Moses doing "community service" for decades in the desert after he killed a man in Egypt. David's sin was tragic, but his confession and forgiveness are recorded in the Psalms.

The beloved Joseph story in Genesis reminds us of those in prison who have been unjustly accused. The prophet Jeremiah served time in a pit, a common form of incarceration in ancient times.

The author of about one-third of the New Testament, the Apostle Paul, was an accomplice who supported Stephen's stoning. Later, his Christian witness led to years of imprisonment.

If we do choose to resist the widespread fear and loathing of all criminals and the formerly incarcerated, we can begin with the Bible's examples of human failure and divine redemption. "Amazing Grace" by John Newton is our favorite hymn. When he was 82 years old, he said, "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things, that I'm a great sinner and that Christ is a great Savior." This hymn revels in God's transforming love for sinners.

We can add church voices to those advocating reform. Judges, bound by mandatory sentencing laws, are legally forced to give long sentences for some crimes. Realizing such folly, some judges have pronounced a sentence and then turned their faces aside to cry. The *New York Times* reports that 3,278 nonviolent drug and property offenses during 2012 have resulted in life without parole. We can start with asking some questions about the practices of county prosecutors and state and court systems in our respective states. A popular prosecutor in Indiana has declared publically, "I want to fill the local jail."

We also have church resources that can help. We can visit. A prisoner has written, "these walls are not only to keep us in; they are there to keep you out." It is getting harder to visit people in jail. This varies by state. In Indiana, the visitors list for prisoners has gone from 30 to 12. The hours are limited. New prisons are typically built in remote places.

Many congregations conduct religious services or offer Bible studies. Church people are also assisting offenders who have to face the many challenges of re-entry. Some congregations surround the recently released person with a support team. A dozen or more people provide or tap their network of friends to provide medical care, legal help, housing, jobs, grooming and clothing for job interviews, transportation, spiritual support and addictions counseling. College Mennonite in Goshen, Ind., and Grace Mennonite Church in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, are engaging in such ministries. And an ecumenical anti-poverty program, www.theopentable.org, started in a Methodist church in Arizona. It can also work for ex-offenders.

It is folly to think that churches alone have the resources to repair a flawed prison system. Only the nation can scale up to the size of this problem.

Another important faith resource is a sense of our common humanity. This is dangerously thin. The *New York Times* reports a prison in Huntsville, Texas, that lost 14 inmates in the last six years due to lethal summer temperatures that got as high as 130 degrees, causing heat stroke. At the same time, they contracted for a costly climate controlled hog barn on the prison farm.

Some criminals should not be released from jail. Some reentry efforts will fail because some fraction of criminals will offend again. But many can be helped. It is folly to think that churches alone have the resources to repair a flawed prison system. Only the nation can scale up to the size of this problem. We need a shift from what does not work to evidence-based, cost-efficient programs that do work.

Church groups can be trail blazers, like the Mennonites in mental health during World War II. Pioneering people of faith can demonstrate a better way. Ideas that help people and save money will spread.

Vic Stoltzfus is a former president of Goshen (Ind.) College and a member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen.

Ecuador mission workers train for trauma care

STAR training helps participants under Colombian refugees' experiences

From left: Daniela Sanchez, Alba Silva, Manuel Ronquillo and Kristin Siggelkow participate in the closing activity of the weekend workshop that taught them how to care for people struggling with the effects of intense traumatic experiences.

As David Shenk tried to fall asleep, terrifying images of the refugees' stories of escape ran through his head. He imagined the death threats and tense midnight escapes from the violence in Colombia. He saw how hard it was to build a new life after leaving everything behind.

Shenk serves as the coordinator of the Quito Mennonite Church refugee project, which receives much of its funding from Mennonite Central Committee Colombia. He is sent by Mennonite Mission Network and Virginia Mennonite Missions.

Shenk listens to the refugees' stories and decides how the organization can best help them with food, housing, microloans, and asylum applications. The issues people were dealing with began to get overwhelming, and he identified in himself the symptoms of fatigue and overwork that can come from social work.

Refugees often arrive in Ecuador with only the clothes on their back, since they had to leave Colombia so quickly. Their land and livelihood were forcefully taken from them in Colombia. When they flee to Ecuador, most are unable to find work; those that do are often not paid a fair wage. Some sleep on mats on the floor and go hungry.

"I felt constantly stressed by the situations people were dealing with, and I struggled to respond," says Shenk. "It felt like my mind was constantly churning, and I couldn't stop thinking about the things different refugees were experiencing that seemed unsolvable."

When Shenk heard of the Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience program (STAR) from Eastern Mennonite University, he brought the idea to César Moya and Patricia Urueña, who together provide pastoral leadership for Quito Mennonite Church. They were sent to serve by the Colombia Mennonite Church, Mennonite Mission Network, and Central Plains Mennonite Conference.

The couple agreed that a workshop on how to deal with the difficult circumstances of refugees would be useful to workers, pastors and church leaders, since many refugee families participate in Mennonite ministries.

The workshop, held in late October 2013, helped participants understand the psychology behind the behaviors of the refugees who've had intense traumatic experiences. As the staff members understand the effects of violence and stress on the refugees, they feel better prepared to make decisions on how to serve refugees.

Paul Stucky, a certified facilitator for STAR workshops, who lives in Colombia and works with the Colombia Mennonite Church justice and peace programs, led the weekend seminar. EMU blessed the development of the seminar based on the STAR program, and Mission Network provided funds through the Schowalter Foundation.

They learned that people who have experienced trauma may be afraid, depressed, in shock, angry, confused, disoriented, resentful, suspicious, apathetic and aggressive, and they may deal with physical ailments like headaches, digestive problems, blood pressure issues, and hypertension, Shenk says.

Participants received visuals, like the Enemy/Aggressor and Survivor/Victim Cycles, which help them to understand the psychology of violence. They also used Bible stories to illustrate the effects of traumatic experiences.

The workshop covered how the workers can avoid burnout. For example, they all did a self-test to identify their level of stress, and then learned techniques to help alleviate and avoid stress.

For those who came to the workshop at the retreat center outside Quito, it was an opportunity to take a break and reflect on their work.

"This has been a time of growth and refreshment, and we equipped ourselves to fulfill God's call for our lives," writes Tatiana Jhayya, who is part of the pastoral team at the Calderón church plant, in a thank-you letter to those who sponsored the workshop.

Shenk says that the workshop helped him internalize a favorite Dorothy Day quote that helps keep his work in perspective: "People say, 'What is the sense of our small effort?' They cannot see that we must lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time."—*Sara Alvarez of Mennonite Mission Network*

The Mennonite supporters gave $87,572 in 2013

844 households, congregations, agencies includes 163 anonymous contributors.

Subscribers to *The Mennonite* again were very generous in 2013, with total contributions of $87,572. Below are the 844 households, congregations and other agencies that made contributions between Dec. 13, 2012, and Dec. 31, 2013. An additional 163 contributors wished to remain anonymous.

We deeply appreciate such support and understand that publishing a print magazine with our schedule would not be possible otherwise. This is because The Mennonite, Inc., receives no subsidy from Mennonite Church USA and is not included in the formula by which contributions are distributed to denomination agencies.—The Mennonite *staff*

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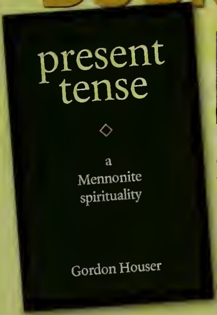
Books from the editors

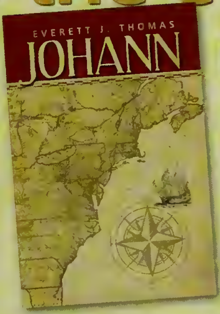


Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality by Gordon Houser explores the heart of Mennonite spirituality and how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short.

$16.95

Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com

Houser's gentle, forthright, and theologically astute voice has nothing to prove. His many years as an "insider"—a church journalist—and "outsider"—one who did not grow up Mennonite—render these reflections on Mennonite spirituality into a unique alloy of intimacy and objectivity.
—Valerie Weaver-Zercher, contributing editor of Sojourners



Everett Thomas' novel ***Johann*** is historical fiction describing the life of Mennonites in Pennsylvania in the 18th century as the French and Indian War unfolded.

$8.95

Order from Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society (www.lmhs.org), amazon.com or betterworldbooks.com

A very enjoyable read! *Johann* is grounded in a clear sense of place, with vividly drawn nautical motifs. It's clear that Thomas had fun writing the novel.
—John D. Roth, professor of history, Goshen College

Johann was uplifting. It made the Lancaster Mennonite story in the mid-1700's come alive from various perspectives: cultural, political, faith and personal.
—Rolando Santiago, executive director, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society

WORKERS

Choi, David, was licensed as associate pastor at Church for the Needy, Wilmington, Del., on Dec. 8, 2013.

Ho, Danh, was licensed as associate pastor and missionary for North Carolina at Upper Darby Mennonite Church, Bala Cynwyd, Pa., on Dec. 8, 2013.

Horst, Deborah J., was licensed as associate pastor of Christian Formation at Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville, Va., on Nov. 24, 2013.

Ralph, Emily, was installed as associate pastor at Sunnyside Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on Oct. 27, 2013.

Santiago, Adalberto, was ordained as lead pastor at Congregacion Menonita Shalom, New Columbia, Pa., on Dec. 8, 2013.

Schwenk, James, was installed as lead pastor of Gingrichs Mennonite Church, Lebanon, Pa., on Dec. 1, 2013.

Smith, Cedric G., was licensed as lead pastor at Mennonite Bible Fellowship Church, New Haven, Conn., on Nov. 3, 2013.

OBITUARIES

Aeschliman, Merlin Eugene, 78, Albany, Ore., died Dec. 11, 2013, of lymphoma. Spouse: Kathleen Harley Aeschliman. Parents: John G. and Viola R. Aeschliman. Children: Beth Ann Beamer, Janette Wisseman, Jeffrey; nine grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Jan. 3, at Albany Mennonite Church.

Amstutz, Clifford Wayne, 85, Hesston, Kan., died Dec. 15, 2013. Spouse: Lois Blosser Amstutz. Parents: Paul and Esther Bixler Amstutz. Children: Wendell, Crystal Oster, C.Paul, Neil, Lynell "Nelly" Fine; 11 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 23 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Blanchard, Lorene Wedel, 89, Reedley, Calif., died Dec. 13, 2013. Spouse: Martin Blanchard (deceased). Children: John, William, Karen Blanchard Haney; five grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 20 at Reedley Cemetery.

Hershberger, Randall J., 54, Wakarusa, Ind., died unexpectedly Nov. 8, 2013. Spouse: Marcia Schrock Hershberger. Parents: Kenneth and Virginia Hershberger. Children: Ellie, Abby. Funeral: Nov. 12 at Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa.

Hershberger, Rosa Stauffer, 75, Elkhart, Ind., died Nov. 30, 2013. Spouse: Winford G. Hershberger (deceased). Parents: Daniel and Anna Zehr Stauffer. Children: Marcella Hershberger, Kent; two grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 14 at Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Kilheffer, Mary Ellen Thomas, 86, Millersville, Pa., died Nov. 19, 2013. Spouse: John Henry Kilheffer (deceased). Parents: Christian and Ada Murry Thomas. Children: Dennis E., J. David, J. Edwin, Thomas L.; eight grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 23 at Willow Street Mennonite Church, Willow Street, Pa.

Krehbiel, Corrine Gerber, 100, Reedley, Calif., died Nov. 23, 2013. Spouse: Arthur Krehbiel (deceased). Children: David, Lora Monge, Julie Ishiaru, Donna McBrien. Memorial service: Dec. 7 at Sierra View Retirement Homes, Reedley.

Marin, Bertha Alice Fast, 86, Dinuba, Calif., died Nov. 17, 2013. Spouse: Eugene Marin (deceased). Parents: Bernard and Justina Fast. Children: Evan, David, Linda; five grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 26 at Dopkins Funeral Chapel, Dinuba.

Martin, Dorothy Leona Troyer, 98, Kalona, Iowa, and Wellman, Iowa, died Dec. 17, 2013. Spouse: William E. Martin (deceased). Children: Bernita Boyts, Carol Bontrager, Gary, Cheryl Martin-Miller, Larry; 12 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 20 at Wellman Mennonite Church.

Martin, Valina, 95, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died Aug. 15, 2013. Parents: Seranus and Blandina Martin. Funeral: Aug. 18 at Floradale Mennonite Church, Floradale, Ontario.

McCafferty, Sandra Offenbacker, 64, Harrisonburg, Va., died Dec. 13, 2013. Spouse: Roger W. McCafferty. Parents: Malcolm J. and Thelma Ferrell Offenbacker. Memorial service: Dec. 17 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Metzler, Margaret M. Blough, 98, Belleville, Pa., died Nov. 21, 2013. Spouse: Rodd D. Metzler (deceased). Parents: Elmer J. and Emma J. Speicher Blough. Children: Ralph, Marvin, Avonelle Peachey, Elmer, Lois Jane Lehman, Ross David, Ruth Kuhns, Rhoda Yoder, Shirley Yoder, James, Alvin Jay, Reba Jean Metzler; 33 grandchildren; 77 great-grandchildren; nine great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 25 at Allensville Mennonite Church, Belleville.

Moser, Donna D., 77, Lowville, N.Y., died Dec. 12, 2013. Parents: Jacob and Nina Lehman Moser. Funeral: Dec. 15 at First Mennonite Church, New Bremen, N.Y.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Nofziger, Berneda Wyse, 95, Archbold, Ohio, died Dec. 6, 2013. Spouse: Dale A. Nofziger (deceased). Parents: Harry and Sarah Wyse Wyse. Children: Lorry, Elaine Schnitkey, Nedra Fredrick, Helen Leu, Lynn; 14 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 10 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Rheinheimer, Irene Miller, 89, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 20, 2013. Spouse: Floyd L. Rheinheimer (deceased). Parents: Jacob and Mattie Yoder Miller. Children: Faye Gonzalez, Anita Yoder, Lowell, Roger, Douglas; 15 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 23 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Schwindt, Homer George, 94, St. Jacobs, Ontario, died Oct. 22, 2013. Spouse: Sylvia Schwindt (deceased). Parents: Geirge and Marian Schwindt. Child: Larry; two grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 26 at Floradale Mennonite Church, Floradale, Ontario.

Spoonhour, Mary Ellen Brindle, 86, Chambersburg, Pa., died Dec. 30, 2013. Spouse: Edgar Lloyd Spoonhour (deceased). Parents: Wilbur and Ruth David Brindle. Funeral: Jan. 4 at Marion Mennonite Church, Chambersburg.

Stamm, Harold William, 96, Wauseon, Ohio, died Dec. 7, 2013, of pneumonia. Spouse: Vesta Miller Stamm (deceased). Parents: Gustav and Priscilla Stamm. Children: Anda Lind, Jan Stamm; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 12 at Tedrow Mennonite Church, Wauseon.

Stutzman, W. Dale, 87, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 24, 2013. Spouse: Ethel Miller Stutzman. Parents: Abraham and Martha Miller Stutzman. Children: Carmen Thompson, Rose Baldridge, Dexter; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 30 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Swartzendruber, Carolyn E. Martin, 77, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 4, 2013. Spouse: Sanford C. Swartzenduber. Parents: Phares D. and Magdalena Miller Martin. Children: Calvin, Philip C.; six grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 13 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Thiessen, Trudy, 88, Waterloo, Ontario, died Jan. 4. Spouse: Abe Thiessen. Children: Karen, David, Barbara, John; six grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Jan. 9 at Waterloo North Mennonite Church.

Voth, Anna Mae Gross, 96, Lititz, Pa., died Dec. 14, 2013. Spouse: Arthur Alvin Voth (deceased). Parents: Melvin and Laura Bishop Gross. Children: Sandy Horst, Susan Voth, Cindy Voth; two grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 20 at Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

Waltner, Catherine "Kay" Ann Handwerk, 75, Hurley, S.D., died Jan. 3. Spouse: Larry Waltner. Parents: Joe and Dorothy Logan Handwerk. Children: Delryn, Marlyn, Charlyn Hay; six grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 11 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Weaver, Elizabeth Irene Lehman, 103, Hesston, Kan., died Nov. 22, 2013. Spouse: Edwin Weaver (deceased). Parents: Clifford and Lydia Lehman. Children: Jerry, Carolyn Esch, Betty Shima; 11 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 21 at Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston.

Yoder, Priscilla Glick, 82, Belleville, Pa., died Nov. 27, 2013. Spouse: H. Glen Yoder. Funeral: Nov. 30 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville.

Zimmerli, Dorothy Patricia Joyner, 86, Telford, Pa., died Oct. 12, 2013. Spouse: Frederick H. Zimmerli. Parents: Bruce and Dorothy Dietrich Joyner. Children: Marijane Zimmerli Lee, Peter, Richard, Mary Zimmerli. Funeral: Nov. 9 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford.

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RESOURCES

Preaching in Hitler's Shadow: Sermons of Resistance in the Third Reich, edited by Dean G. Stroud (Eerdmans, 2013, $20), begins with a look at Christian life inside the Third Reich, giving readers a sense of the dangers pastors faced when they went into the pulpit. The second part of the book presents 13 well-translated sermons by various preachers, including Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann and others not as well-known.

Living Gift: John's Jesus in Meditation and Poetry, Art and Song by Willard Swartley (Evangel Publishing House, 2013, $24) compiles artistic pieces—poetry, hymn texts and photos of visual art—that are companions to the biblical text. It coincides with the start of a new quarter in the *Gather 'Round* curriculum for children, published by Brethren Press and MennoMedia.

Branch: A Memoir with Pictures by John L. Ruth (TourMagination and Mennonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania, 2013, $30) is by a pastor, historian, filmmaker, tour leader and churchman and includes 210 full-page photos, each introduced with a short essay on the individuals portrayed, the location and the occasion.

'Welcome to Iran!' Christian Encounters with Shia Muslims by Evelyn and Wallace Shellenberger (iUniverse, 2013, $16.95) challenges stereotypes of Iranians and shares the authors' experiences of finding welcome, hospitality and spiritual growth by interacting with people who share a different culture and religion.

The Spiritual Practice of Remembering by Margaret Bendroth (Eerdmans, 2013, $16) argues that remembering must become regular spiritual practice, part of the rhythm of our daily lives as we recognize our world to be, in many ways, a gift from others who have gone before.

Approaching the End: Eschatological Reflections on Church, Politics and Life by Stanley Hauerwas (Eerdmans, 2013, $24) explores the significance of eschatological reflection for helping the church negotiate the contemporary world.

Inspired: The Holy Spirit and the Mind of Faith by Jack Levison (Eerdmans, 2013, $24) works to recover the early conception that the Spirit of God is given to all flesh as part of creation and pulses in every breath we take.

The Nonviolent God by J. Denny Weaver (Eerdmans, 2013, $25) challenges long-standing assumptions of divine violence in atonement theology, the violent God pictured in the Old Testament and the supposed violence of God in Revelation and argues that the nonviolence of Jesus most truly reflects the character of God.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.30 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite,* call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email advertising@themennonite.org.

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Arthur Mennonite Church, a Mennonite Church USA-affiliated church located in the heart of Illinois Amish country, is seeking a ***half-time youth leader/ministry team member***. Schedule and salary negotiable. For more information contact: arthurmennonite@yahoo.com.

Columbus Mennonite Church, an active urban congregation, seeks a ***half-time pastor of Christian formation*** committed to Anabaptist values and theology. Primary responsibilities will include Christian education, pastoral care and working with small groups. Mennonite Church USA salary guidelines followed, including health insurance. Interested candidates should contact Central District Conference minister Lois Johns Kaufmann at confmin@mcusacdc.org.

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Eastern Mennonite University
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Franconia Mennonite Church is seeking a ***part-time music ministry director*** for a newly created position. The successful candidate will have training and experience in vocal and instrumental music and be committed to a blended style of worship. Responsible for providing direction of the entire church music program to support the message being delivered and lead to an enhanced Christian worship experience. In coordination with the pastoral team and worship commission, this individual will provide leadership, vision and training to the worship teams, oversee children's music programs, lead congregational singing and direct choirs. Hours: Approx 20 per week. Salary commensurate with experience. Send resume to Franconia Mennonite Church, Attn: Monique Kratz, 613 Harleysville Pike, Telford, PA 18969 or mkratz@franconiamennonite.org.

Kauffman Museum, North Newton, Kan., recipient of national and regional awards, including the 2013 Kansas Museums Association Award for Excellence, seeks an interdisciplinary, hands-on and entrepreneurial full-time ***director/curator***. Will lead a committed professional staff, board of directors and volunteers at the Bethel College-affiliated museum, which presents the Mennonite immigrant story in the context of the land and people of the central Great Plains. Nonprofit or teaching experience preferred. Start date negotiable—June 2014-June 2015. Details and application information at www.bethelks.edu/kauffman. EOE/AA.

March 10-14, 2014, **Amigo Centre** will host Transitional Ministry Training for individuals interested in leading congregations through a process of preparation for a new chapter of leadership. Visit tmt.amigocentre.org for additional information, or contact Amigo Centre at 269-651-2811.

Sunnyslope Mennonite Church, a well-established urban congregation in Phoenix, has an immediate opening for a ***lead pastor***. For information, contact Dick Davis at 909-243-5003 or dickdavis@pacificsouthwest.org.

Landis Communities, Lititz, Pa., seeks ***vice president of advancement*** to oversee planned giving, capital fundraising, advise the CEO in mission advancement. Bachelor's degree and executive leadership experience required. www.landiscommunities.org.

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Questions for Mennonites on the margins

Janet Trevino-Elizarraraz lives in San Antonio, Texas. She can be reached at alpasofirme@gmail.com.

In a column last year I shared my perspective of living on the margins of the U.S. Mennonite experience and was grateful to have met many of you at the biennial convention in Phoenix. While there, I realized the metanarrative of marginalization is one that many Mennonites share in one way or another, and I believe it's a gateway for bridging the Mennonite church and other marginalized people in our church and society.

I experience stress with the Mennonite church because I haven't released the belief that being in an Anabaptist community is crucial for my personal growth, beneficial for the faith community and necessary for engaging and serving a Mennonite audience. I'm not currently connected to an Anabaptist congregation.

In an effort to expand my understanding and current place outside the church, I've decided to dedicate my consecutive columns to spotlighting employed people of color who limit their interactions with Mennonites to the 40-hour work week from Mennonite Church USA-affiliated agencies and institutions. I also hope these columns can benefit Mennonites as a window into their church from an outsider's perspective.

Before I ask them questions about their parachurch experience, I've decided to lead the way and answer them myself.

I make a clear distinction between Mennonites and Anabaptists, and I would more clearly align myself as Anabaptist theologically.

What is your service description?

My interactions with the Mennonite church in the last two years have been informal and spontaneous except for my quarterly article of four years for *The Mennonite*. My participation as a blogger/writer at the convention and in the winter issue article of *Timbrel* are my latest contributions.

How do you view your work?

It's a calling. Even through the struggles of working with this church, I still love the best of what it has to offer, and I have hope for its areas of tension and struggle.

How would you define Mennonites or Mennonite culture?

I make a clear distinction between Mennonites and Anabaptists, and I would more clearly align myself as Anabaptist theologically. Mennonites have a Germanic, historical birthplace that connects itself genealogically with a modern group of people that continue to embody the values of hard work, service, simplicity, Jesus' following, peace-seeking, kingdom politics, community-building and an Anabaptist faith walk. As their faith calls, they seek to reach out as Christ would to all thos in need and have historically created agricultural miracles out of wildernesses. These are remarkable people willing to sacrifice homeland for the freedom to be who they are and live according to their convictions. In the last century, they've opened their doors to outside cultures and are known recently in broader Christian circles for their unique perspective on radical, holistic Christian discipleship.

What has surprised you about your work with Mennonites?

From the moment I was invited to serve in the church, I was surprised by the love and opportunities for someone like me—young, person of color and female—to serve in respected and empowering ways. It's because of this I haven't walked away. My Christian experience began in Evangelical churches, and few offered a place for women to serve, and fewer consider poverty, rac and economic issues faith imperatives.

What challenges have you met with working with Mennonites?

Mennonites have gained a great reputation worldwide on peace/reconciliation issues, and it's false to expect the same degree of expertise in i terpersonal and church relationships. I had a steep learning curve, having never been in such tightknit community and one that I wasn't able to overcome. It's easier to help others in building peace, but within, it's hard work among your ow people, especially with the growing pains of increased diversity of culture and race. I admire th willingness and effort to continue to push forwar as well as the acknowledgement of when it's bes to release for the time being.

Have you considered joining a Mennonite community outside your service?

I lament that I don't have a relationship with m local Mennonite congregation. I do wonder what the future may hold and if peace and reconciliatio is possible.

Anything else you'd like to add to give us peek into your Mennonite experience?

I am a radically different and better person because of my experiences with Mennonites. I hop every person I interview for this column can say the same. TM

BEST FILMS OF 2013

1. 12 Years a Slave
2. Gravity
3. Her
4. American Hustle
5. All Is Lost
6. Before Midnight
7. Mud
8. Nebraska
9. Stories We Tell
10. Philomena
—Gordon Houser

BEST BOOKS OF 2013

The Luminaries: A Novel by Eleanor Catton

My Bright Abyss: Meditation of a Modern Believer by Christian Wiman

The Nonviolent God by J. Denny Weaver

Someone: A Novel by Alice McDermott

Unapologetic: Why, Despite Everything, Christianity Can Make Surprising Emotional Sense by Francis Spufford*—gh*

FILM REVIEWS

Her (R) is a captivating film set in the near future about a lonely writer who develops an unlikely relationship with his newly purchased operating system that's designed to meet his every need. It raises profound philosophical questions about relationships and technology, about reality, love and death. The unique premise of a man falling in love with his operating system works wonderfully.*—gh*

American Hustle (R) is a fast-paced story of a con man, Irving Rosenfeld, who with his seductive British partner, Sydney Prosser, is forced to work for a wild FBI agent, Richie DiMaso, who pushes them into a world of New Jersey powerbrokers and mafia. Based on a scandal from the 1970s, this film's script is intelligent, funny and surprising, and the cast is superb.*—gh*

Is the Internet unsafe for women?

Many hail the Internet as the ultimate democratic tool. Everyone has a voice and has access to information and to others they wouldn't have otherwise.

But many women are finding the Internet an unsafe place and have experienced terrible abuse and threats for stating their opinions.

In the January/February issue of *Pacific Standard*, Amanda Hess exposes this reality in her article "Women Aren't Welcome Here."

She begins the article by telling about receiving messages from a Twitter account set up, it seemed, for the purpose of making death threats to her.

I cannot recount the entire text here, but the writer says, "I am 36 years old, I did 12 years for 'manslaughter,' I killed a woman, like you. … Happy to say we live in the same state. Im (sic) looking you up, and when I find you, im going to rape you and remove your head."

Hess is a journalist who writes about sex (among other things). She dialed 911. The police officer who showed up two hours later didn't know what Twitter is. But Twitter, for Hess, is where she spends much of her time.

She offers other examples of abusive language and threats but notes that she's not exceptional. She gives examples of other women writers who have been threatened.

And it's not just professional writers, she says. "According to a 2005 report by the Pew Research Center," she writes, "women and men have been logging on in equal numbers since 2000, but the vilest communications are still disproportionately lobbed at women."

That survey also reported that 5 percent of women who used the Internet said "something happened online" that led them into "physical danger."

Another study showed that simply appearing as a woman online can inspire abuse. "In 2006," Hess writes, "researchers from the University of Maryland set up a bunch of fake online accounts and dispatched them into chat rooms. Accounts with feminine usernames incurred an average of 100 sexually explicit or threatening messages a day. Masculine names received 3.7."

While there are laws against cyberstalking, the Internet is global, and law enforcement jurisdiction is local. And the abuse has become so prevalent that women are often told to ignore it.

But this carries a cost, Hess writes. "Threats of rape, death and stalking can overpower our emotional bandwidth, take up our time and cost us money through legal fees, online protection services and missed wages."

Police often tell women who've received threats to go offline, but that has costs as well "as the Internet becomes increasingly central to the human experience," Hess writes.

Another study found that Internet harassment is routinely dismissed as "harmless locker-room talk," perpetrators as "juvenile pranksters" and victims as "overly sensitive complainers."

The justice system, Hess says, tends to treat Internet threats as less real and don't follow up.

She notes that while American police forces are overwhelmingly male, "the technology companies that have created the architecture of the online world are, famously, even more so."

Hess, understandably, is interested in finding solutions to this problem. It affects her every day.

But all of us need to be aware of this alarming situation and look for ways to make every part of our world, including the Internet, safe for everyone, particularly women. TM

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

situations in mind, but by bringing up such examples as justifications for aborting the child, she raises the same challenge that the pacifist is often confronted with in questions like, "What about such-and-such a tyrant?" or, "What if someone broke in and attacked your family?" If our response to such questions indicates that violence is never the answer, this conviction should hold for every situation.

Let us think of an unwanted or crisis pregnancy as a conflict situation that calls for a creative and nonviolent resolution rather than continuing the cycle of violence. As believers in total nonviolence, Mennonites should find a natural home in the consistent life ethic. *—Julia Smucker, Tempe, Ariz.*

MennoMedia statement coverage

I would like to express my gratitude for MennoMedia's statement in future publications of books by John Howard Yoder, and your coverage of it.*—Carol Rose, Chicago*

Grateful for cover story

Thanks for the excellent article and challenging story of Femi Hollinger-Janzen (January).*—Wilma Shank, Goshen, Ind.*

I just read the article and want to say you did a fantastic job on it. I appreciate you getting my story out there.*—Femi Hollinger-Janzen*

White privilege still exists

Thank you for printing "White Spiritual and Racial Formation" by Tobin Miller Shearer (December 2013), keeping the church aware that there is more work to be accomplished in racial understanding that leads us to action.

When I was more directly involved in interracial work, "white privilege" was not a part of our vocabulary, although the practice was very evident. The term "white privilege" is/may be misunderstood by many, as there are many white people also suffering from unemployment and living in poverty.

In the 1960s, I and three other men—a Presbyterian pastor, a Mennonite writer and a Rabbi—traveled to Hattiesburg, Miss., to assist in voter registration work. The Rabbi vowed to use only restrooms designated for "colored." When he found there was never paper in the "colored" restroom, he went into the "Men's Room"—saved for white males—and took the paper supplies from there to the "colored" restroom.

Maybe it was a small thing, but did you, as a white person, ever suffer the humiliation of consistently not finding the convenience of paper supplies in the public rest room?

That is white privilege. According to Tobin's article, white privilege is very much alive today.

Why use such a seemingly small illustration to confront such a large problem? According to Jesus, the sparrow, grass, mustard seed and grain of wheat give us the understanding to confront all problems.*—Lyn Hershey, Payette, Idaho*

Thanks for sharing our story

Thank you so much for writing the article on our story for *The Mennonite* ("Ephrata Couple Honors Baby's Death," January). I thought the article was well written.*—Janae Hostetter, Ephrata, Pa.*

Congratulations to Anna Groff

I just learned that your have been appointed interim editor of *The Mennonite*. Congratulations. The board made a good choice; all the best as you begin the new role in 2014. As someone who is interested in the future of church publications, I will be very interested to see what changes you bring to the magazine over the next couple of years.*—John Longhurst, Winnipeg, Manitoba*

Congratulations. You have hung in there and are ready to fill this important role. I am very excited for you and thrilled to say "you used to work in our office." You will do well, but these are certainly trying times.*—Melodie M. Davis, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Congratulations on your new appointment as interim editor of *The Mennonite*. I know you will do a good job. Yo have a good track record with the publication. I wish you well and want you to know I will be one of your loyal rea ers.*—J. Lorne Peachey, Scottdale, Pa.*

Just a note wishing you well as you step into the interim editor/CEO role for *The Mennonite*. You were being groomed for this role for a number of years. I trust you find the work fulfilling as you give leadership during this time of transition.*—Warren Tyson, Lancaster, Pa.*

I just received *TMail* and was absolutely thrilled that you have been named as interim editor for *The Mennonite*. May God give you much wisdom, creativity and courage as you tak on this role. I know you will do well. Blessings to you.*—Lil Goertzen, Winnipeg, Manitoba*

I am sending you congratulations on being appointed interim editor. I don't have any trouble seeing the threads that pull through from your earlier years to now—interest and skills in communication, writing, church, intersections of faith and life, and now management. And someday I will be interested to hear your own reflection on what has brought you to this place.*—Dorcas Lehman, Leola, Pa.*

I'm delighted that you will be the interim editor for *The Mennonite*. I think you will do a great job.*—Rhoda Keener, Shippensburg, Pa.*

I wanted to congratulate you in your appointment as the interim editor for *The Mennonite*. I look forward to working with you. Blessings.*—Carlos Romero, Goshen, Ind.*

Discerning God's will together

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.—Romans 12:2 TNIV

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.—Philippians 1:9-11 TNIV

Deep in my heart, there's nothing that I want more than to know God's will for my life—God's good, pleasing and perfect will, as the Apostle Paul described it to the Romans.

As executive director of Mennonite Church USA, I have the same longing for our whole church. With Paul, I'm praying that our love as a church may grow in knowledge and depth of insight, so that we, too, may be able to discern and pursue God's best in our world today.

Discernment is an essential calling for the church. Paul Lederach wrote: "Christians are to discern because they are living under God, who is also discerning. God's discernment and Christian discernment are to coincide. Christians are to live so that they are approved now and also in the judgment."

J. Lawrence Burkholder, former president of Goshen (Ind.) College, said that the hardest question a church can ask itself is how it can know the will of God in relationship to the world of today. In his mind, "discernment is the clue to New Testament ethics." They would look at an event in history and they would ask themselves as a community under the Holy Spirit, "What is the meaning of this? Is it good or bad? Is it for Christ or against Christ?" In contemporary language, one might call this an "exegesis of the situation."

How did the church go about this kind of discernment?

Calvin Redekop described discernment as three primary activities: (1) It engages in deep and intense study of what the Scriptures and the Spirit of Christ command and demand its followers to do. (2) It analyzes the sources and meaning of God's Word in terms of its original meanings and what they are saying today. (3) It is concerned about defining the nature of Christian life and obedience in contemporary terms.

The three scholar-leaders I've cited spent much of their lifetime helping their generation become a more discerning community. That endeavor is just as relevant today.

In that vein, I will cite two current theological educators. Michael King, dean at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., recently defined discernment as "involving the community of believers gathered in Jesus' name around Scripture in the presence of the Holy Spirit to find its way through the pressing, complex and sometimes divisive issues of a given context."

And Sara Wenger Shenk, president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., recently wrote about communal discernment: "Despite many failures, we continue to hold up this glowing vision because we believe that we're really onto something. We believe that to seek a common mind within a shared conversation (for the purpose of a more unified witness) is not only a worthy goal but the very heartbeat of God's reconciling mission in the world."

Discernment is an essential calling for the church.

That's the heart of our vision for Mennonite Church USA—a longing for God's healing and hope to flow through us to the world.

And that's the hope with which I published a book by the same name as this column, at the invitation of Michael King as publisher for Cascadia Publishing House.

May God enable us all to better understand God's will as we engage in communal discernment, a core commitment of a faithful church.

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Year of young leaders

Anna Groff

Could 2014 be the year of young leaders in Mennonite Church USA? It looks that way according to the many Mennonite-related press releases and announcements this past year.

In 2014, Aaron Kauffman, 35, becomes the executive director of Virginia Mennonite Missions. Sarah Thompson, 30, will lead Christian Peacemaker Teams. Jenna Liechty Martin, 28, will direct Camp Friedenswald in Cassopolis, Mich.

These follow directors a good decade or two older. They join a growing list of leaders under the age of 40 in our denomination. See page 34 for a news story on this trend.

As an editorial staff, we look forward to featuring some of these individuals as writers in 2014 in our Leadership column. We hope this offers a place for them to introduce themselves, share their visions and begin conversations related to their work with our readers.

Back in 2011, blogger Tim Nafziger wrote on our website: "Naming of gifts among young people is much overlooked in our churches. We forget that calling out the gifts of the new generation is a critical part of what it means to be community to one another."

These leaders follow directors a good decade or two older. They join a growing list of leaders under the age of 40 in our denomination.

Several years later, I sense a shift not only to naming these gifts but an openness to trust young people to carry considerable responsibility.

This does not come without risk and possible discomfort. In 2013, New Voices columnist Peter Epp noted that "our society is going through a major shift in its attitudes toward many things, e pecially religion, and that Millennials (those bor after 1980) have some major differences from Baby Boomers."

Navigating these changes will require grace from all involved.

On a personal note, I am deeply honored to jo these aforementioned leaders as I take on the p sition of interim editor for *The Mennonite*, beginning this month.

I want to thank the board of directors of The Mennonite, Inc., for its faith in my leadership. I also extend my gratitude in advance for the patience and encouragement they will demonstrat to me in coming months.

One of the most exciting aspects of my new role is spearheading a new website, which we hope to launch later this year. In this sense, my role with *The Mennonite* comes full circle. In 2006, I was hired as a part-time, temporary employee with the main responsibility of working o a new digital presence.

About seven years later, I revisit this type of project with a greater sense of urgency, as *The Mennonite*'s web presence carries more significance than ever—both in terms of serving the d nomination and as a sustainable business model for The Mennonite, Inc.

Finally, I am overwhelmingly thankful for former editor Everett J. Thomas' mentorship over these past years. Thomas will continue his relationship with *The Mennonite* in his role as editor emeritus.

I will work from my home office in Tucson, Ariz., while making regular trips to Elkhart, Ind., and other locations.

I look forward to continuing to connect with readers across the country, and I invite your feed back and suggestions.

I wish all the best to these new leaders and blessings in this new year.—*ag*

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The Mennonite

It's about forgiving

Messages of hope come out of the tragedy of Howard Schmitt's death.

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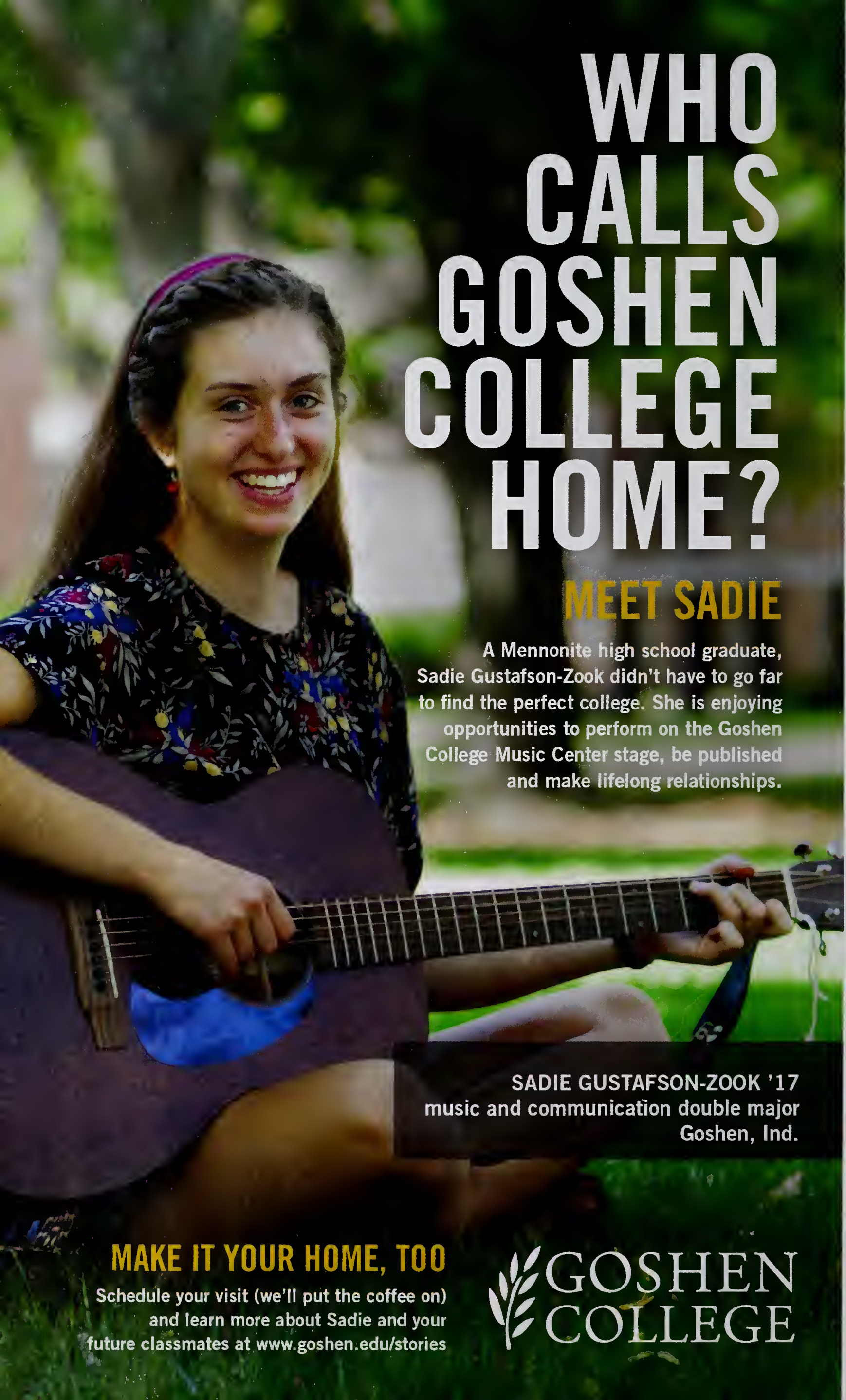
INSIDE:

- Begin with stories
- A Mennonite pope?
- Anabaptist and evangelical
- When the watchdog didn't bark
- Do not define others' realities



WHO CALLS GOSHEN COLLEGE HOME?

MEET SADIE

A Mennonite high school graduate, Sadie Gustafson-Zook didn't have to go far to find the perfect college. She is enjoying opportunities to perform on the Goshen College Music Center stage, be published and make lifelong relationships.

SADIE GUSTAFSON-ZOOK '17
music and communication double major
Goshen, Ind.

MAKE IT YOUR HOME, TOO

Schedule your visit (we'll put the coffee on) and learn more about Sadie and your future classmates at www.goshen.edu/stories

GOSHEN
COLLEGE

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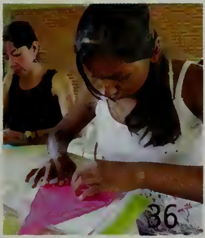

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ON THE COVER: Photo by Rick Buchanan compliments of Everence

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Mennonite Church USA

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite*, 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Racism and prison

Thanks to Vic Stoltzfus for so accurately depicting the “prison industrial complex” as not just a broken system but a toxic system (February). It is important to also note the ineffectiveness of a prison system that sends 700,000 offenders back to our communities only to have two-thirds of them reoffend within three years of release. The monetary cost of incarceration is only one part of the ineffective equation. We know that racism exists, as evidenced by the fact that more than 60 percent of the people in prison are racial and ethnic minorities.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, we know that for black males in their 30s, one in every 10 is in prison or jail on any given day (compared with one in 90 white males). We also know that causes are not linked to white people committing fewer crimes than people of color but rather can be linked to higher arrest and conviction rates for racial minorities as well as stiffer sentences, once they have been convicted.

We also know that every night, almost 3 million children go to bed with a parent in prison or jail. We need to focus on supporting these children and find ways to mitigate the trauma they experience through no fault of their own. Mennonite Central Committee provides resources of restorative justice that seek to strengthen communities rather than further weaken them through its advocacy work and resources for education and action. One example for education is the Children

Facebook comments on Mountain States’ decision (February)

My concern and issue is that this is not a Mennonite Church USA decision but a regional conference decision that will greatly affect the entire denomination. This should be decided at the delegate sessions. I hope to hear what the Constituency Leaders Council response will be.—*Robert Martz*

Blessings to Theda Good as she lives true to herself and her calling.—*Cheryl Lehman*

Now Mennonite Church USA must step up its efforts to re-educate those who disagree with this action so that the denomination can move forward. This does not bode well for the future of MC USA. Relationship now outweighs truth.—*Jeff Blackburn*

It is with much sadness that I lament the end of Mennonite Church USA. There are well-intentioned people on both sides of this issue, but I truly fear that the church will not survive it.—*Timothy Fletcher Baer*

Before you bemoan the fact that this signals the doom of the church, you’d better take into account that there are far more sinister and silent ways that the church’s existence today is threatened. Young people are leaving in droves, and few are returning. All denominations are affected by this. Put everything on the table, not just this issue.—*Beth Sholly* of Prisoners exhibit available for loan. Visit http://www.mcc.org/usprogramservices/restorativejustice/resources. *—Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz, Mennonite Central Committee*

Contrarians bring challenges

I must confess I was challenged by Michael Danner's Opinion piece (February). His arguments have merit and speak to my own odyssey through various denominations to the Mennonite church. Had I stayed in the church of my childhood, I would be in the Church of God, Anderson, Ind., today. The church I left to become a Mennonite was Church of God, Cleveland, Tenn., where, in my last months there, I annoyed everyone by wearing T-shirts bearing slogans like, "When Jesus said, 'Love your enemies,' he didn't mean 'Kill them!' "

I recently rode with my pastor and our congregational delegate to the Virginia Mennonite Conference winter delegate sessions. He asked me what response I would desire from the congregation if I decided to go back to the military. I replied that I would leave the denomination. Since then I've questioned that response. But if I stayed I would probably challenge my pastor and fellow congregants with the "virtues" of redemptive violence (of course, I wouldn't use the quotation marks then) and the need to install an American flag in the sanctuary, to which we could pledge allegiance. I'd probably request songs such as "Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "America the Beautiful." Contrarians can present a healthy challenge to the status quo or bring destructive dissension. If they keep their thoughts to themselves are they really living in community? If all churches could handle it there would be no Mennonite denomination; all churches would be nondenominational.*—Scott Smith, Greensboro, N.C.*

MCC and abortion

I was glad to read "A Consistent Life Ethic" from Julia Smucker in the letters section in February. I, too, feel there is a double standard in some Mennonite circles in our stance toward peace and reconciliation in regard to abortion. I actively support Mennonite Central Committee and MCC U.S. efforts. I often get emails alerting me when to call my senators on issues such as gun control, immigration and Syria. I have noticed that none of these email notifications concerns abortion legislation. So I decided to ask MCC U.S. about why there isn't any lobbying or work done on the issue of abortion. The answer was, "As to why we do not work on the issue, our office's advocacy priorities grow out of MCC's work here in the [United States] and around the world. Because MCC's work does not directly intersect with the issue of abortion, it has not been identified as a priority for us."

How is it that MCC work does not "directly intersect with the issue of abortion" when its vision statement is, "MCC envisions communities worldwide in right relations with God, one another and creation."

My fear is that MCC U.S. has lobbying agenda and is afraid to bite the hand that feeds it if it is to lobby against abortion while simultaneously lobbying for gun control and immigration reform. Calling out Democrats on an issue that is not "a consistent life ethic" may have political ramifications for MCC U.S. I hope that we seek first the kingdom of God and realize we are subjects first to his authority and allegiance beyond that of our broken and sinful political system and that MCC will consider allocating some of its domestic resources toward this issue. *—Matthew Ingersoll, St. Paul, Minn.*

(continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

It was an honor to write the cover story on Howard Schmitt for this issue (page 12). Back in May 2013, John Rohrer wrote an email describing Schmitt's tragic death and the Schmitt family members' path of healing and suggested we write a story.

"I have repeatedly stated that had he not chosen the ministry, he would have been a CEO of any large business or organization," Rohrer wrote.

We want to thank Jean Schmitt and Valerie Jones for their willingness to share their journey.

Their story instructs and challenges the broader church and touches the many people who knew Schmitt as a pastor.

"As we continue our journey to forgiveness, this article is a key piece for us to help bring closure. We are hoping this can run in the March edition so that it will be complete before Easter and within a year of the disposition hearing," Valerie Jones wrote to me in an email in December 2013.

In other news, this is a busy time of year for leaders within Mennonite Church USA. The Hope for the Future gathering (see pages 32 and 56) and the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board meeting took place in late January and February.

The Executive Board faced an incredible challenge at their meeting as they worked on a statement addressing LGBT inclusion. Excerpts from the EB statement and reports on the meeting are on pages 34 and 35. Go to www.themennonite.org for the full statement and more information.

Also, the Mennonites Arts Weekend was held Feb. 7-9 in Cincinnati. Kate Yoder, an intern for *The Mennonite*, attended the gathering and wrote a news story on pages 42-43.

Kate is a junior art and English writing major, and we are delighted to have her as a regular contributor during this spring semester.*—Editor*

Historian to examine church's response to John Howard Yoder

ELKHART, Ind.—Mennonite Church USA discernment group formed in August 2013 to continue healing and reconciliation work in the wake of John Howard Yoder's abuse of women and ongoing questions about how the church responded to it. One of its goals is this: "In light of the reality that many and varied assumptions are being voiced about what occurred, we will design a process to fairly and accurately document the scope of Yoder's sexual abuse and the church's response to it after a careful review of the evidence."

The discernment group, with the authorization of the Executive Board, has invited a historian to engage historical research and documentation on this subject. Rachel Waltner Goossen is professor of history at Washburn University in Topeka, Kan. She has 25 years of experience writing about Mennonite history, peace history and women's history.

Goossen will work with previously unreleased written sources as well as conduct oral history interviews with people who were involved in institutional accountability and discipline processes and others who experienced or were knowledgeable about JHY's abuse of women. Goossen's intent is to make her scholarship available through churchwide and scholarly publications, including *The Mennonite*, *Mennonite World Review* and *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. She anticipates completing her work by the summer of 2015.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Photo provided

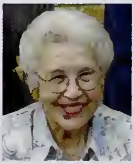
Communion on World Fellowship Sunday

Jim Miller, pastor of Covenant Mennonite Fellowship in Sarasota, Fla., and Marco Guéte, conference minister of Southeast Mennonite Conference served Communion on World Fellowship Sunday, Jan. 26. Eve MacMaster, pastor at Emmanuel Mennonite Church in Gainesville, Fla., preached on the lectionary texts that included 1 Corinthians 1:10, which reads, "… that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose." Two years earlier, CMF withdrew from the conference over differences regarding homosexuality.
—*Covenant Mennonite Fellowship*

Ada Mae Haury built foundation of excellence for forensics, debate

NORTH NEWTON, KAN.—Ada Mae (Gressinger) Haury, Bethel College's first professor to be named emeritus faculty, died Jan. 13 in Newton, Kan. She was 94.

Haury taught speech and coached debate and forensics at Bethel College from 1963-85 and was the first professor to be awarded emeritus status, in 1989.



She was born in Halstead and graduated from Halstead High School as the valedictorian of her class. She was a 1941 graduate of Bethel College.

During and just following World War II, Haury taught English, drama and forensics and coached state championship debate teams at Fowler, Halstead and Russell, Kan.

Several of Haury's debate students in the Russell High School class of 1947 went on to illustrious careers in law, TV production and politics, including one known nationally, Arlen Specter, formerly the ranking Republican on the Senate Judiciary Committee (Specter died in 2012).

Haury married Robert A. Haury, whom she met at Bethel College, in 1947.—*Bethel College*

CPT to challenge denial of entry into Palestine in Israeli High Court

CHICAGO—Israeli border authorities have been denying Christian Peacemaker Teams workers entry into Pale tine. Last summer, they turned back two reservists from the airport in the same week. Since then, two more CP workers, Jonathan Brenneman and Patrick Thompson, have been denied entry crossing the border from Jordan into the West Bank. Brenneman attempted three times within the space of three weeks and was told the Israel authorities would not allow him to enter the West Bank because of his in volvement with CPT.

In response to requests from CPT's partner organizations in Palestine and Israel, CPT Palestine has been devising a strategy to ensure CPTers are able to enter the country. A major part of this strategy is a case that CPT's lawyers have put together for the Israeli courts.

The case charges that the Israeli authorities, without informing CPT, have established an unreasonable policy that denies members of CPT the right to enter the occupied Palestinian territories (as the border authorities explained to Brenneman), even though they have an invitation from the municipality of Hebron/Al-Khalil and other Palestinian organizations to do so. This action violates several of Israel's basic laws, including the Law of Freedom and Dignity and the right of the accused to have their case heard in court.—*CPT*

A walk to honor Native survivors and encourage truth and reconciliation

WINNIPEG, Manitoba—Four people from Winnipeg plan to walk 550 kilometers (about 340 miles) to honor Indian Residential School survivors and encourage awareness about truth and reconciliation.

Brad Langendoen, Erin Sawatzky, Laurens Thiessen van Esch and Ann Heinrichs plan to walk from Stoney Knoll, Saskatchewan, to Edmonton, Alberta, March 7-26.

In 2006, Mennonites, Lutherans and First Nations signed a memorandum of understanding at Stoney Knoll outlining the need for all parties to respect "the sacred nature of covenants" and agreeing to work together for "peace, justice and sufficiency for all our communities."

A spiritual journey as well as a physical one, the walk coincides with Lent, the season of lament. It concludes just in time for walkers to attend the final Truth and Reconciliation Commission event beginning March 27.—*Mennonite Church Canada*

Bluffton University photo

Moderator addresses Bluffton University

Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, moderator of Mennonite Church USA, shared her story Feb. 4 at Bluffton (Ohio) University. When asked how she will bring her perceptions to the role of church moderator, she said her experiences will enable her to speak from the perspective of those on the margins of society.—*Bluffton University*

Norristown congregation celebrates new life

NORRISTOWN, Pa.—On the day their meetinghouse and office building, New Life Plaza, was scheduled to be sold at sheriff's sale, members and friends of Nueva Vida Norristown New Life (NVNNL) gathered for a celebration. Instead of an impending foreclosure, the congregation experienced God's miraculous intervention and, on Dec. 18, 2013, they met to worship, pray, testify and burn the sheriff sale signs.

NVNNL is a multilingual and multiethnic congregation in Franconia Conference that provides over $250,000 worth of social services for its community, including a child-care center, youth center, internet café, photo ID application services and a discipleship housing ministry. The congregation formed in 1990 with the merger of three Mennonite congregations: one Latino, one African American and one Anglo and African American. its vision for racial reconciliation and justice has led to ongoing witness in the community and within the regional and national Mennonite church.—*Emily Ralph for Franconia Mennonite Conference*

84 preachers in 12 years

CHAPEL HILL, N.C.—From its beginning late in 2001, Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship (CHMF) has been shaped by the participation of students from the nearby Duke Divinity School and Department of Religious Studies. CHMF began and functioned for several years without a pastor, during which time students from Duke, along with others, preached and worked to establish a viable congregation.

In its 12 years, CHMF has had sermons from 84 preachers, of whom 49, including two faculty members, have been from Duke. Seven have been from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The overall list includes 32 women. While the congregation has had guest preachers, most of the preachers have been regular CHMF attendees who know and listen to each other, while providing sermons that reflect their own approaches to Scripture.

Isaac Villegas became pastor at CHMF after finishing his studies at Duke. He preaches just over half the time.—*Thomas Lehman*

Jared Zook wins top prize in Everence video contest

GOSHEN, Ind.—Thousands of online voters selected Jared Zook's video "I Am a Penny" as the winning production in the Everence Money Talks video contest.

Zook, of Goshen, will receive a $1,000 cash prize for winning the contest. As part of the shared prize, Zook and his project partner, Elizabeth Derstine, selected Foods Resource Bank of Chicago to receive a $1,000 grant. Foods Resource Bank raises money to help people in developing countries grow their own food.

The video shows how even a penny can accumulate through collective and shared interest and make a difference.

The contest gives young people an avenue to express their views about the role of money and to showcase creative talent in our communities.

The video is available to view at Everence.com/moneytalks.—*Everence*

Begin with stories

Ron Adams is pastor of Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church.

In my last piece for *The Mennonite*, I wrote about my brother Jim. I called our denomination to expand its welcome to include our LGBTQ sisters and brothers. I invited us to follow the rule of love rather than the rule of law.

Many of you responded. With only a handful of exceptions, all who responded did so kindly. Ordinarily, I dwell on the exceptions, like those who treated my brother like an issue to be debated, or who assured me that he was a sinner in hell.

I'm one who can hear a dozen affirmations and one complaint, then spend all my energy focusing on the complaint. But not this time.

What continues to bless me is that most of you were graceful and loving in your responses. I'm not sure why I'm so surprised that I was treated with such care. You are my sisters and brothers, whether we know each other or not. How else would you respond but kindly, even if you disagree with me?

I've been in the church long enough, though, to know better than to count on such kindness. Sad to say, in my experience we Christians can be just as mean and hard-hearted as anyone else.

> You built a bridge between us instead of a wall. This reminded me that even those of you who disagree with me are my sisters and brothers.

As I sent the article off to be published, I braced myself for the hostile onslaught and was amazed when it didn't come.

How we begin a difficult conversation matters. Too often, we begin with intellectual arguments and proofs. We marshal arguments and bombard each other with them in hopes that our enemies will submit and leave the field. The military language is intentional. We nonviolent Mennonites regularly make war on each other over matters of faith and practice. No blood is shed, but hearts are wounded, and so are relationships.

In my experience, conversations begun that way inevitably devolve into battles with winners and losers. We treat the lives of people as issues to be debated. We speak dogmatically rather than pastorally.

I believe we do better to begin the conversation with our stories. Mine was about losing a brother.

Most of you began your responses by expressing sympathy. Some went on to disagree strongly with my theology and my call for inclusion. But that disagreement felt different than it might have without your acknowledgment of my brother's death. I could receive your disagreement more easily because you began with a word of kindness.

In recognizing my loss, you built a bridge between us instead of a wall. This reminded me that even those of you who disagree with me are my sisters and brothers. And remembering that we are sisters and brothers is essential if we are ever to learn to live together with all our differences.

You may disagree, but it seems clear to me that one way or another our denomination will find a way to make room for those congregations called by the Spirit to welcome and bless our LGBTQ sisters and brothers.

I believe the same is true about making room for congregations and pastors called to bless same-sex unions. When that will happen, only God knows. How it will happen, it seems to me, is up to us.

Will we continue to debate across the walls, shouting Bible verses and theological positions at each other, hoping to wipe out or push out those on the other side once and for all? Maybe we will. If we do, I don't hold much hope for us as a church.

Or will we begin by telling stories, building bridges and in other ways doing our best to remember who we are to each other in Christ? If we do, even though the way forward will be difficult, I believe we will come out on the other side together.

Not long ago, I would have seen no alternative to the shouting and the building of walls. We are so good at both.

Then I told you a story. And you were kind, even if you didn't like my conclusion. You helped me remember who we are at our best. You proved to me that we Mennonites really can agree to disagree in love.

Dutch Mennonites and unity of the Spirit

In the summer of 1660, leaders of various Mennonite churches in the Netherlands met in Leiden to discuss a theological controversy over the nature of the church. Several years prior, two young ministers from Amsterdam, Galenus Abrahamsz de Haan and David Spruyt, had presented a statement to their co-ministers denying that any church could claim to be the "true" church of God. Moreover, they argued vigorously that no one's conscience could be bound by the authority of a church office—whose bearers were fallible human beings—or by doctrines formulated by humans or by a church discipline that was always administered by humans. The conference convened to address the matter, led by Thielemann Jansz von Braght, disagreed with de Haan and Spruyt, declaring they should retract their claims or be removed from their ministries.

The men refused to do either. In the next decade, the widening rift between the two sides found expression in a bitter, public exchange of polemical tracts that onlookers from the Reformed Church derisively labeled "The War of the Lambs."

In the midst of the painful controversy, however, word reached the church in the Netherlands that the Swiss Brethren—spiritual cousins of the Dutch Mennonites, living in villages around the cities of Zurich and Bern in Switzerland—were facing a new wave of persecution. In many respects, the Swiss Brethren differed sharply from their Dutch counterparts: whereas the Dutch were largely urban, wealthy, highly educated and skilled in the arts of rhetorical exchange, the Swiss Brethren were an agrarian people, led by an unschooled, unpaid lay ministry, living at the very margins of Swiss society. The two groups spoke different languages, had different histories and differing theological orientations.

Yet despite these differences—and despite their own internal controversies—the churches in the Netherlands joined in their support for their sisters and brothers in the faith. Ministers in various congregations began to communicate directly with the Swiss Brethren through letters and personal visits, learning more about their unjust imprisonment and impoverished conditions.

Throughout the 1660s, Dutch Mennonite leaders interceded with Swiss authorities, arguing vigorously for religious toleration. In 1672, the Dutch churches took up a formal collection to provide financial assistance to refugees who had been forced to flee to the Palatinate. In the decades that followed, congregations in the Netherlands joined to form a Committee on Foreign Needs to channel their support to brothers and sisters beyond their borders, who they barely knew.

In the meantime, the theological controversies in the Netherlands continued. To the end of his life, de Haan insisted that unity in the church could be grounded only on the unity of the Spirit, not on a formal confession of faith or a fixed list of moral principles. And from the broad perspective of Dutch Mennonite history, his was the voice that eventually prevailed. When most of the various branches of the Dutch Mennonite church merged in 1811, the basis of the union was a general appeal to the unity of the Spirit and the explicit assurance that "every congregation kept its freedom to make such decisions about doctrine as it wished, without the right to bind others to their convictions."

The Mennonite church in North America today is facing a host of significant challenges. The impulse toward division and toward more congregational forms of polity could easily incline us to turn inward, focusing our primary energy on our own local issues and particular identities. Yet we know that we are also connected to a global fellowship. We are part of a larger Anabaptist-Mennonite body that includes groups who speak other languages, embrace distinctive cultures, enjoy their own worship styles and express their faith in unique ways. Moreover, many of those brothers and sisters are living in settings of political instability and economic insecurity.

In July 2015, our churches will host the 16th global assembly of Mennonite World Conference in Harrisburg, Pa. Indeed, preparations for "Pennsylvania 2015" are well underway. Meanwhile, the issues we are facing within Mennonite Church USA cannot be ignored. But even amid our differences, might it be possible for us, like the Dutch Mennonites three centuries earlier, to join in a generous and full-hearted support of brothers and sisters from around the world who need our support? As you prepare church budgets for the coming year, and as you plan your family vacations and personal giving, please consider the work of Mennonite World Conference and how you might contribute to the well-being of our global family of faith. TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

The impulse toward division and toward more congregational forms of polity could easily incline us to turn inward.

Daddy days: the growing use of paternity leave

Many, from feminists to evangelicals, have lamented the absence of fathers in families. But the growing use of paternity leave by businesses may be addressing this problem in unique and surprisingly healthy ways.

So claims Liza Mundy in her article "The Daddy Track" in *The Atlantic* (January/February). She notes that while some larger, progressive companies have been offering paternity leave, now several states have come on board. California, as usual, leads the way. In 2002, she writes, "[it] became the first U.S. state to guarantee six weeks of *paid* leave for mothers and fathers alike, financed by a small payroll-tax contribution from eligible workers." Later, New Jersey and Rhode Island offered 12 and 13 paid weeks, respectively.

Here's the surprise, according to Mundy: "In the long run, the true beneficiaries of paternity leave are women, and the companies and nations that benefit when women advance."

A report by the World Economic Forum showed that "countries with the strongest economies are those that have found ways to further women's careers, close the gender pay gap and keep women—who in most nations are now better educated than men—tethered to the work force after they become mothers," writes Mundy.

It's an interesting strategy, if it even is a strategy. A 2007 study found that 60 percent of professional women who stopped working reported that they were largely motivated by their husbands' unavailability to share housework and chid-care duties," writes Mundy.

Rather than simply raising the wages of women, which needs to happen anyway, paternity leave addresses some of women's concerns.

Quebec has been offering such leave for some time. In 2006, it increased the financial benefits for paid leave and offered five weeks that could be taken only by fathers. This gave an extra incentive for men to take such leave. And studies found that "fathers who take paternity leave are more likely, a year or so down the road, to change diapers, bathe their children, read them bedtime stories and get up at night to tend to them," writes Mundy.

You may say men should have been doing these things anyway, but in large part they haven't. Such a change in behavior has other benefits as well. According to sociologist Scott Coltrane at the University of Oregon, when men share "routine repetitive chores," women feel they are being treated fairly and are less likely to become depressed, writes Mundy.

Paternity leave also helps change the stigma of parenting. Some employers are more reluctant to hire younger women because they may get pregnant and require maternity leave. "The rise of paternity-leave plans," writes Mundy, "raise the possibility that bosses will stop looking askance at the résumé of a 20-something female applicant, or at least apply the same scrutiny to a similar male applicant."

Quebec's plan has certainly led to changes, and early signs show that California's paid-paternity-leave program is increasing in use. The percentage of "bonding leaves" claimed by men rose from 18.7 in 2005-6 to 31.3 in 2012-13.

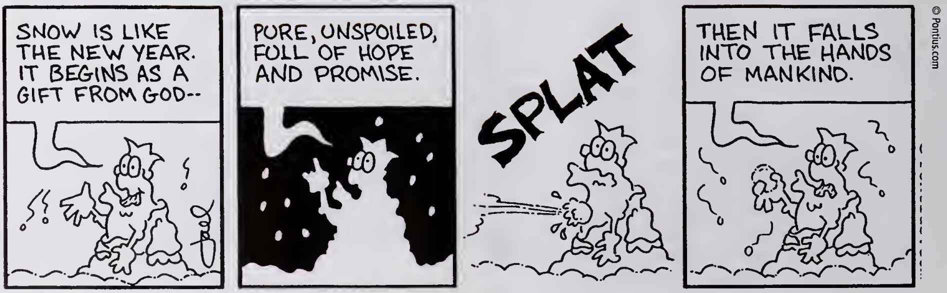
Furthermore, it has not been shown to significantly decrease the number of jobs. Workplaces have figured out ways to adjust. "The biggest hurdle," writes Mundy, "seems to be getting the word out, particularly among lower-income families." And yes, in California, at least, the policy is that it extends leave to men in non-white-collar jobs.

As use of paternity-leave programs increases, writes Mundy, "working fathers increasingly report feeling more work-family conflict than working mothers do."

Finding ways for fathers to be more involved in raising their children can only make for healthier families. It also helps create healthier communities.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


SNOW IS LIKE THE NEW YEAR. IT BEGINS AS A GIFT FROM GOD--
PURE, UNSPOILED, FULL OF HOPE AND PROMISE.
SPLAT
THEN IT FALLS INTO THE HANDS OF MANKIND.
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—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “Men are competent in groups that mimic the playground, incompetent in groups that mimic the family.”—Novelist Jane Smiley

The goodness of big government

Benjamin Radcliff, a political scientist at the University of Notre Dame, has compared the size of government in different countries to the sense of well-being among its citizens. He concludes that “the smaller the government, the less happy people are.” Key to government providing a greater sense of well-being are measures that keep people in a capitalist economy from feeling as though they are “commodities.” Government programs that care for older people and the unemployed and free people to care for infant or ailing family members contribute to a sense of well-being. People of all income levels benefit, as do both men and women.—*Christian Century*

$4.8 billion

Amount U.S. taxpayers subsidize the oil industry each year.—*Mother Jones*

Ignore that smartphone

Smartphones make it easy to socialize and search the Internet, but the ability to constantly connect can have a downside. A new study of 500 college students found that those who use their cellphones most often are likely to be less happy, more anxious and less successful students than those who sometimes ignore their phones.

“There is no ‘me’ time or solitude left in some of these students’ lives,” Kent State University researcher Andrew Lepp tells *The Daily Mail* (U.K.).

After tracking students’ cellphone use, Lepp and his team found that those who could put their cellphones aside for periods of time earned higher GPAs and experienced less anxiety and greater happiness in their lives than more frequent phone users.
—*The Week*

53%

Of all adult mobile-phone owners have been on either the giving or receiving end of a “distracted walking encounter”—getting banged into because someone was peering at their smartphone.—*The Week*

The red-plate special

A study by researchers from the University of Parma in Italy, published in *Appetite*, showed that the color red may help people eat less. The researchers served test subjects popcorn and chips on crockery of various colors and found that the snackers sampled smaller amounts when the items were offered on red plates. The subjects reported the same level of enjoyment of the treats regardless of what they were served on, suggesting the plate color made the difference. The researchers theorize that red—due to either cultural associations such as traffic lights or biological ones such as blood—is linked in our minds with “danger and prohibition.”—*Pacific Standard*

28.5%

of Americans ages 65 and over were poor in 1966, two years after the war on poverty was declared.

9.1%

of seniors were poor in 2012, mainly because of Social Security and Medicare. The percentage of African Americans living below the poverty line declined from 41.8 in 1966 to 27.2 in 2012.
—*The Week*

Abortion rate drops

The abortion rate in the United States has dropped to its lowest level since the procedure became legal in 1973, according to a new data analysis that reflects a 13 percent decline in both the abortion rate and the number of abortions from 2008 to 2011. The report issued Feb. 3 by the Guttmacher Institute in New York finds the 2011 rate declined to 16.9 abortions per 1,000 women ages 15-44, second only to 1973, when the rate was 16.3 per 1,000.—*Religion News Service*

Top 10 most religious states

- Mississippi: 61 percent are very religious
- Utah: 60 percent
- Alabama: 57 percent
- Louisiana: 56 percent
- South Carolina: 54 percent
- Tennessee: 54 percent
- Georgia: 52 percent
- Arkansas: 51 percent
- North Carolina: 50 percent
- Oklahoma: 49 percent
- Kentucky: 49 percent

Top 10 least religious states

- Vermont: 22 percent are very religious
- New Hampshire: 24 percent
- Maine: 24 percent
- Massachusetts: 28 percent
- Oregon: 31 percent
- Nevada: 32 percent
- Washington: 32 percent
- Connecticut: 32 percent
- Hawaii: 32 percent
- District of Columbia: 32 percent

—*Gallup*

It's about forgiving

Messages of hope come out of the
tragedy of Howard Schmitt's death.

Jean and Howard Schmitt. Photo provided

Jean and Howard Schmitt woke up to a routine morning on Sept. 15, 2011, in Plain City, Ohio.

"Howard and I got up at the usual time, ate breakfast and did the online jigsaw puzzle, as was our custom," Jean says.

Then Howard, 77, went to the basement to finish his sermon for Sunday. Howard, a longtime pastor, was serving as part-time pastor at South Union Mennonite Church in West Liberty, Ohio. The year before he had celebrated 50 years in ministry.

However, that sermon was one he would never preach.

Later that afternoon, Howard and Jean attended a church council meeting in West Liberty. On their way back, about five miles from their home, a car came directly at them.

Howard tried to avoid the car but ended up veering off the road into a cornfield. Still, the airbags exploded, and the oncoming vehicle hit them.

After the crash, Jean looked over at Howard and spoke to him, but he did not respond. She could not reach him because of her locked seat belt and her own serious injuries.

"I knew he was gone, so I said goodbye to him," she says.

The driver of the other car was Mitchell, a 17-year-old local high school senior and football player. The passengers were also football players, 14 and 15 years old. All three boys were on their way home from football practice.

The two passengers were able to get out of their car and went to Jean's car door, which was closest to them. Jean told him to check on her husband.

One boy stayed with her, while the other went to Howard, who told the boy, "Just hold my hand," before he died.

Mitchell and Jean were the most seriously injured and were airlifted to the ICU of the local hospital.

Jean suffered many injuries, including multiple broken bones, and post-traumatic stress disorder due to the accident and watching her husband die without being able to assist him.

She could not participate in the funeral for her husband, which delayed her ability to mourn his death.

Valerie Jones, the Schmitts' daughter, says Jean experienced a "delayed grief reaction" due to her injuries and her pain medication.

During her three-month stay in the hospital, nursing home and inpatient rehab stay, the two passengers came to visit her. "They were dealing with a huge, huge burden," says Valerie, who lives in Plain City, Ohio.

"We think it was at a point well after the accident, several months, before she was really able to do her grief work," said Valerie on July 26, 2013.

The situation became complicated when the charges against Mitchell were released in December 2011, which included aggravated vehicular homicide, aggravated vehicular assault, failure to control and driving under the influence.

"I made a deliberate decision not to let myself become bitter. It wouldn't change the outcome," said Valerie. "There was no room emotionally in my heart to be bitter."

A year and a half after the accident, the disposition hearing took place in Juvenile Court on Good Friday, March 29, 2013. (In juvenile court, the sentencing is referred to as a disposition, so this was, in essence, Mitchell's sentencing).

Jeff, the Schmitts' son, who lives in Boston, Valerie and Jean addressed the court.

Jean said in part: "Mitch, I will need to forgive you many times. My prayer for you is that you have and are continuing to learn from this horrible experience that will haunt you for the rest of your life. Howard would not want you to suffer any more than you have. He is in a better place and has already forgiven you."

Mitchell could have seen jail time, but the Schmitts requested a different kind of sentence—one of reconciliation and healing.

One boy stayed with Jean, while the other went to Howard, who told the boy, "Just hold my hand," before he died.

After the hearing, the judge made the courtroom available for the Schmitt family and Jeff Bartlett, South Union's pastor at the time, to meet with Mitch and his parents for the first time, as they were advised not to have contact with the family before that day. The meeting of the two families concluded with Bartlett leading a prayer for reconciliation.

"It was a first step in my process of forgiving," writes Jean.

There were apologies and a lot of tears, Valerie remembers.

"What took place in that courtroom had a big impact on the judge, prosecuting attorney and the victim advocate," says Bartlett, a pastor who was working on transitional issues at South Union from December 2011 to August 2013.

Fortunately the court asked for and followed the Schmitts' input. Part of Mitchell's sentence included addressing Howard's congregation. On April 28, 2013, he and his mother attended South Union.

Valerie led worship the Sunday before, so she prepared the church for Mitchell's visit, asking

Gary and Valerie Jones, Jean and Howard Schmitt and Jeff Schmitt at Jean and Howard's 50th wedding anniversary in May 2010. Photo provided

On that day, Jean realized she was able to forgive Mitchell with all of her heart.

them to "come with a forgiving spirit," she said. Bartlett visited Mitchell earlier that week to help prepare him and show him the bulletin for the service.

That spring morning, Valerie and Gary, her husband, were the first to greet Mitchell and his mother when they arrived.

During the service, Mitchell stood before the congregation and apologized to the Schmitts and the church for the accident. The family's victim advocate attended the service.

While looking at the Schmitts, Mitchell said, "From the bottom of my heart, I apologize. … Based on everything I'm hearing, [Howard] was an amazing man. I hope to do something good with my life. I hope that I can make you proud."

On that day, Jean realized she was able to forgive Mitchell with all of her heart. Now, Mitchell is in college and doing well, although "he will carry a burden for the rest of his life," says Jean.

After the service, Jean was the first person to go over to Mitchell. Following that, many people from the church greeted him and his mother. In fact, Mitchell and his mother were the last two to leave the sanctuary, says Bartlett.

"It was not an easy thing," Bartlett says. "There was deep pain, … [yet] the seeds have been planted for many good things to grow—in the life of Mitch, the officers of the court, the surrounding community and in South Union and the Schmitt family."

A portion of Mitchell's sentence also required community service. A couple weeks after his apology, he returned to South Union Church. A member—Bob Frey—worked with Mitchell on some church projects.

Then he took Mitchell out to lunch and talked about Howard's ministry and legacy. Bob and Mitchell paused at the tree planted by the congregation in Howard's honor.

Mitchell also spent time at Howard's gravesite.

"We don't want my dad's death to be something senseless," Valerie said. "We want the best for Mitchell. We don't want to be held captive by our grief, nor do we want to be bitter."

Howard was born in 1933 in Waterloo County, Ontario. He served as pastor of many congregations throughout his ministry. They include: Wanner Mennonite Church in Cambridge, Ontario; Calvary Church in Ayr, Ontario; South Union Mennonite Church in West Liberty, Ohio; Bayshore Mennonite Church in Sarasota, Fla.; and Sharon Mennonite Church in Plain City.

After his retirement in 2004, he continued to serve Oak Grove Mennonite Church in West Liberty as transitional pastor before returning to South Union as pastor in 2006.

"His outstanding intellect, leadership and warm personality made him a quintessential pastor and role model. I have repeatedly stated that had he not chosen the ministry he would have been a CEO of a large business or organization," John Rohrer, a friend and member at Sharon Mennonite Church, wrote in an email dated May 14, 2013.

Jean believes there are messages of hope that came from this tragedy. "After being a pastor's wife for 50 years, I realized there are many churches where grudges are being held," she says. "Life is too short to carry a grudge against a fellow believer."

"There are people around us that would love to see us be angry," said Valerie. "But we believe that it's about forgiving."

Anna Groff is interim editor of The Mennonite.

The words and actions of Pope Francis resonate with much of Mennonite faith and practice.

Habemus papam Mennonitum

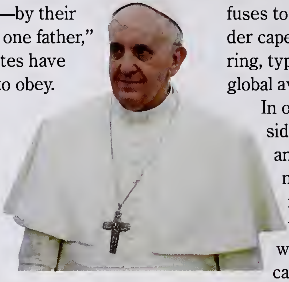
(We have a Mennonite pope.)

by Robert Brenneman

OK, I'll admit it. I count myself among the Christians around the world who find themselves smitten by the new pope. Perhaps it helps that I am married to a Latin American, that I teach at a Catholic college and that I spent most of my 20s in Central America. I can appreciate the joy felt by the Spanish-speaking world, elated to finally count one of their own as the holder of this most sacred office. But I think my appreciation goes deeper than this. ▶

In his speech and with his actions, Pope Francis has already begun to change the character of the papal office in ways that reflect a gospel that is more familiar and dearer to me as a Mennonite Christian. While reading yet another article (in the secular press) describing the simplicity and pastoral humility expressed by Pope Francis, I couldn't help but think for a moment—Habemus papam Mennonitum—we have a Mennonite pope.

Rest assured. As far as I know, there are no plans afoot for the election of a Mennonite pope or for the official acceptance of any supreme earthly spiritual authority—in Rome, Kansas or Winnipeg—and that is as it should be. Anabaptist theology is fundamentally suspicious of institutional power, especially when it involves a visible hierarchy. We believe in an "upside-down kingdom" that promotes a model of power that is bottom up rather than top-down. And we typically address our leaders—from pastors to "overseers," to teachers and professors—by their first name only. "Call no one father," said Jesus, and Mennonites have tried as hard as anyone to obey.



Pope Francis has made a conscious effort to change both his everyday lifestyle and his adornment in ways that communicate in a more straightforward manner the values of the Christian gospel.

Just as palpable as our distrust of hierarchy is our contempt for pageantry, especially in worship. Simplicity is our hallmark. Mennonite houses of worship are austere, plain and sometimes downright homely. So the elaborate ornamentation of the Vatican with all its rituals and ceremony strike most of us as strange at best and perhaps even antithetical to the itinerant Jesus of the Gospels. Even the Anabaptist groups that have bishops give them no special clothing or accessories—no ring, no title, no special hat, staff or stole. So how could a Mennonite be smitten by a pope?

It is the direction of movement, the changes in protocol and the shifts in message that have captured the attention of millions of Catholics and even some non-Catholics like me. It is too early to judge for certain the long-term impact Francis wil have on his office or on the 1.2 billion-member church he leads. But several signs give plenty of room for optimism, even excitement. Although it will take time to do so, Pope Francis has pledged to move power outward, giving regional bishops more freedom to name the most appropriate candidates for offices in their own districts. This policy promises to allow them to build local institutions that are more responsive to the local context.

Just as significant, from an Anabaptist perspective, is his demonstration of a commitment t a modest lifestyle that displays servant leadership. Refusing to live in the 10-room papal apartments of the Vatican Palace, Pope Francis resides instead in a sparsely decorated two-room apartment originally built for visitors. True to his chosen name, Francis also exhibits a visible preference for simplicity over pageantry. He refuses to wear the brightly colored mozzetta shoulder cape that signifies spiritual authority. And his ring, typically the object of great attention and global awe, is a simple silver ring.

In one of several emails that have gone viral, side-by-side photographs show Pope Francis and his predecessor each conducting a formal appearance on the same site just months apart. The differences are easily visible. Pope Francis sits on a simple wooden chair instead of a huge, elaborately carved, gold-plated throne. Francis wears a all-white cassock and white chasuble instead of the bright red chasuble and red stole with gold embroidery preferred by Benedict. On his feet are simple black shoes rather than the famous bright red slippers of his predecessor. (Benedict chose his clothing for its traditional symbolism—red represented Christ's blood—but New York and Paris interpreted his decisions differently.) Finally Francis wears in the photograph the same metal cross he wore as a bishop in Buenos Aires, and there is no red carpet beneath his feet. In short, Pope Francis has made a conscious effort to change both his everyday lifestyle and his adornment in ways that communicate in a more straightforward manner the values of the Christian gospel. Simplicity, austerity, humility—these are values easily recognizable to Mennonites.

But it is the pontiff's scathing critique of global economic inequality that most caught the attention of this Mennonite Christian. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, his first formal papal statement of length, Pope Francis chastised global leaders for allowing the continuing growth of a staggering wealth gap between the rich and the poor. He warned against trusting in "trickle-down theories" of economics as capable of lifting the burden of poverty from millions who continue to suffer.

As a native of Argentina, Pope Francis knows firsthand the stinging reality of living in a society in which extreme poverty and great wealth exist side by side. Reminding his readers of the importance of observing the sixth commandment, he drew attention to the way a society so divided can take the lives of its weakest members. "Today we also have to say 'thou shalt not' to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills."

As a sociologist who studies the youth gangs of northern Central America—some of the most unequal and also the bloodiest societies on earth—I can easily appreciate the connection between economic inequality and violence. I have seen with my own eyes and heard in the powerful testimonies of the ex-gang members I have interviewed, the ways in which the shame and pain of growing up poor and without hope in a society filled with shopping malls and billboards can give rise to a desperate attempt to grasp money by any means, including violence. Therefore, the pope's deliberate attempt to call the nations of the world to actively address a growing income gap both within and between nations is both hopeful and inspiring to me.

Finally, in addition to his vision for a more horizontal exercise of authority, his penchant for simplicity and his emphatic denouncing of economic inequality, Pope Francis has made peace an urgent theme in his formal declarations. On New Year's Day he delivered a message from his window in which he reminded the faithful that they have, "a responsibility … to work so that the world becomes a community of brothers who respect each other, accept each other in one's diversity and take care of one another.' At one point, he even set aside his notes, going off script to say, "What is happening in the heart of humanity? It is time to stop." He closed with a prayer asking that "the courage of dialogue and reconciliation prevail over the temptation for vendetta, arrogance and corruption."

Francis is not the first pope to denounce injustice or promote world peace. Yet something about the way he delivers his message—his humble routine, his austere dress and his pastoral manner—allows him to capture the attention and respect of many who have disregarded the Vatican and even written off Christianity itself. In one of the most arresting photographs I have ever seen, a press photographer captured a spontaneous moment when Pope Francis, while conducting a routine blessing of pilgrims at St. Peters on Nov. 6, 2013, stopped to spend several minutes embracing and praying over a man with a rare genetic illness that results in the outbreak of tumors over the entire body. In an act that brings to mind Jesus' healing of the leper, the pope blessed the man, kissing him and placing his hands directly on the man's severely deformed face and head. Images like these provide the world—including the faithful and even Mennonites—with a visual demonstration of the compassion about which Pope Francis speaks so consistently. Like his washing of the feet of prisoners on Maundy Thursday, they speak a language that we can feel as well as comprehend.

> The pope's deliberate attempt to call the nations of the world to actively address a growing income gap both within and between nations is both hopeful and inspiring.

As Mennonites, we have never relied on a pope to instruct us to live as Christ did. Yet I believe Rome's new bishop has much to teach us if we listen. Neither a radical ideologue nor a stern traditionalist, Pope Francis has instead taken an incarnational approach to leading his church, embodying the values he teaches and thus commencing a papacy that is as close to a "Mennonite papacy" as anyone could imagine. Although we do not truly have a Mennonite pope, if we ever did, we could only hope that he might be as humble, wise and grace-filled as Francis. May God grant him peace.

Robert Brenneman is a sociology professor at Saint Michael's College in Colchester, Vt.

Compassion and science

Prairie View mental health center celebrates 60 years of ministry.

by Misty Elder

Groundbreaking for Prairie View was held Oct. 19, 1952.
Photo provided

During World War II, many conscientious objectors, including 1,500 Mennonites, gained firsthand knowledge of how the mentally ill were warehoused in state-operated hospitals. When the war ended and they returned to their home congregations, these young men shared their experiences and pondered how their church should improve the conditions in mental health treatment. Their sense of urgency and moral responsibility inspired Mennonites to advocate for dispelling the stigma associated with mental illness. They recognized that there were people suffering from mental disorders within their own families, congregations and communities, and they deserved the highest quality and most humane treatment possible.

mourgeFile.com

During this same time, great minds emerged in the field of psychiatry and the science of the human brain, and treatment for diseases evolved. "Together these forces created a kairos moment," says Dorothy Nickel-Friesen, two-term board member for Prairie View, Inc., and former conference minister for Western District Conference. The combination of science and Christian witness set in motion a ministry that continues to transform lives decades later.

The Central Care Advisory Committee, composed of Mennonite Central Committee-related groups, planned and prayed over their shared vision for five years. Their Christ-centered work led to the opening of Prairie View on March 15, 1954. Founded on the vast prairie of south central Kansas, the result was construction of a 60-bed psychiatric hospital for Mennonites. It was built entirely by volunteer labor and staffed largely by volunteers.

Word spread quickly beyond the Anabaptist community, and the leadership at Prairie View felt an obligation to provide service to anyone who needed it. Christian compassion, a treatment philosophy based on scientific study, and innovation remain at the heart of Prairie View today.

Prairie View, a member of Mennonite Health Services Alliance of Mennonite Church USA, transforms lives through the treatment of all behavioral health conditions, supporting the patient, caregivers and loved ones. Through inpatient, outpatient and community-based services, more than 13,000 patients are served annually by Prairie View.

The science and our understanding continue to advance. Prairie View is among industry leaders when it comes to innovation and strategic collaboration. Clinicians of multiple disciplines provide specialized services to children, families, adults and older adults. Addiction treatment is approached from a holistic therapy method, treating the mind, body and spirit of the individual. Prairie View is the only provider in the state of Kansas for Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) therapy, a unique FDA-approved nonmedication treatment for depression.

Prairie View also provides experiential learning for corporations, congregations and boards who desire to create strong teams to sustain them into the future. Opportunities to work together and overcome challenges encountered on high and low elements on Prairie View's adventure courses empower groups to communicate and cooperate in ways that enhance effectiveness in board rooms and classrooms across Kansas. Prairie View provides comprehensive behavioral health services and promotes holistic wellness.

Prairie View's evolving community alliances are helping build healthier communities where everyone can succeed. They have been a strong influence in the creation of a fully integrated community health collaboration that will serve the needs of those most vulnerable. With a focus on the uninsured and those in poverty, the Harvey County (Kan.) Health Collaboration will provide comprehensive health and wellness under one roof. In a newly renovated facility, Prairie View's Health Home Services, the Harvey County Health Department and the Health Ministries Clinic serve patients from multiple counties in south central Kansas.

Christian compassion, a treatment philosophy based on scientific study, and innovation remain at the heart of Prairie View today.

It isn't easy. "External regulation and the incredible demand on all types of resources provide challenges to delivering services to everyone who needs us," says Jessie Kaye, president and CEO of Prairie View, Inc. "Although we receive funding ▶

Vernon Becker (right) and other volunteers shingle the roof of the original Prairie View Hospital. Volunteers from Mennonite churches from as far away as Nebraska and Oklahoma contributed their skills to construction of the hospital prior to its opening March 15, 1954. Photo provided from various public systems and many commercial payers, it's important to realize that these payments do not cover the actual cost of service delivery, especially for those without adequate health insurance or financial resources. And those funders certainly do not reimburse for chaplaincy services, prevention efforts or needed outreach to families and communities. Thus, we have a continuing need for charitable support."

Philanthropic support in the form of annual gifts, grants and charitable bequests are valued tools to ensure the quality, scope and legacy of Prairie View. "If we can nurture relationships with the faith community," Kaye says, "and if the church embraces its role as supporter, advocate and influencer, we can overcome the stigma of mental illness and substance abuse disorders and improve access to high quality care and support."

> We must be responsible stewards of our human resources.—Jessie Kaye

Another serious concern is the scarcity of qualified clinicians. "We must be responsible stewards of our human resources," Kaye says. "Our staff is the heart of who we are. High risk, low compensation and emotional intensity make human service ministry challenging, and the risk for staff burnout is high. We currently face a scarcity of geriatric psychiatrists, child and adolescent psychiatrists, addiction treatment clinicians and addictionologists. Maintaining these valuable specialties within our organization is critical."

Kaye tells of one patient who, one year ago, was in a wheelchair, barely able to speak and continuing to decline. "Through our comprehensive approach to treatment," Kaye says, "her clinicians were able to diagnose and treat a medical condition that complicated her mental disorder. Today she is walking, talking, a very active participant in her own treatment, and involved with various community and church activities. Her strong faith together with our individualized services, is sustaining her as she deals with issues of grief and loss."

Kaye says she sees Prairie View as an extension of the greater church: "Our mission statement describes the 'compassion, competence and stewardship' we offer in the Spirit of Christ."

The main campus of Prairie View remains in Newton, Kan., with outpatient offices in Hillsboro, McPherson and two locations in Wichita, Kan. Through bylaw and in agreement with MHS Alliance, a majority of the composition of the Prairie View governing board are Anabaptist affiliated. Covenant relationships with Western District Conference and South Central Conference of Mennonite Church USA keep faith at the core of the mission. Prairie View maintains relationships with other Mennonite-related institutional ministries while sharing expertise and resources with area congregations and leadership.

Photo provided

Misty Elder is director of advancement at Prairie View Mental Health Center in Newton, Kan.

Prairie View offers a wide range of mental and behavioral health services for children, youth, adults, older adults and families. It serves as the community mental health center for three counties. Other services include:

Adventure course and recreation therapy
Addictions Treatment Center
Alcohol and substance abuse services
Art therapy
Case management
Center for Older Adults
Center for Sexual Health
Community-based services for children/youth
Community support for adults with serious and persistent mental illness
Driving capacity evaluations
Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)
Medication education/management
Psychiatric and partial hospitalization
Psychological testing
Special Purpose School, grades 1 to 12
Therapy for individuals, groups, families
TMS therapy for depression
Turning Point residential treatment for youth

Anabaptist and evangelical

Are Mennonites denying that Anabaptists were evangelical?

by Myron S. Augsburger

The study of our history offers the enrichment of life, for we learn from the exercises of faith tested in the past. When we select from the past and incorporate it into the present, we need to be honest about our selectivity. We understand our Anabaptist forebears best if we see the larger picture of their setting, their interpretations of Scripture and the faith that shaped their lives. Although we read them through our lens, we need to be honest in reviewing their values.

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Many voices seem to reduce the matter of faith to having religion rather than seeing faith as a relationship with God, who has come to us in Jesus. Religion is humanity's search for God, but the gospel of Christ is the good news that God has come to us, made himself known and is open to accept us. Salvation is not an it; salvation in Christ is a new relationship. Salvation is identifying with Jesus as his disciple and in him being reconciled to God. This life of discipleship is a covenant in which our very lives bear witness to the reality of faith as a response to him, an opening of our lives to him.

In sharing the gospel, the Anabaptists were the evangelists of the Reformation. While Lutheran and Reformed churches were centered around institutions, the Anabaptists were the "hedge preachers" spreading all across Europe.

Where do we think the thousands of martyrs came from if Anabaptists hadn't won them to a new life of freedom through faith in the living Jesus our Lord. They were mocked for their extensive preaching and opposed to the point of death, but in many cases, when one was martyred, another stepped up to take his or her place.

Much of the current bias minimizing evangelism is often a reaction to the approach of so-called evangelists who use approaches that are more coercive or threatening to people.

This conviction for evangelism as sharing Jesus' call of grace was expressed centuries before the modernist-fundamentalist controversy, so their evangelism is not to be thought of as an expression of fundamentalism. The Anabaptists were advocates of personal privilege and responsibility; each person can come to God. This is not through institutionalized Christianity with its sacraments, rituals or state-church identification.

Much of the current bias minimizing evangelism is often a reaction to the approach of so-called evangelists who use approaches that are more coercive or threatening to people. But we can view evangelism as the total of a transformed life, focusing on everything that makes faith in Jesus an option or a possibility for people. This understanding of evangelism makes each of us evangelists in our lives and professional roles.

Education, for example, should be an expression of evangelism in that when education is holistic it will include the meanings of the gospel in relation to every area of study. We do not manipulate people in the classroom, but we are not fair if we don't make discipleship of Jesus understood clearly, thereby making faith in him an option for the honest student. Further, our professional roles, or relationships in and through our work, are the living evidence that walking with Jesus as a disciple is the most central aspect of our lives.

Sharing with others, especially in deeds of love to the needy, expresses the gospel in visible form. Our interest in interfaith dialogue is important, but dialogue means that each person hears the other authentically, and unless we are clear about the message of Jesus that we believe, we rob the other of authentic participation in dialogue.

Evangelistic preaching, as with revival preaching within our faith community, is motivational. It is more personal than a theological lecture or an academic exegesis. But all good preaching moves with a goal. As the late Howard Charles taught, "a good sermon must march." It is going somewhere. Motivational preaching engages the hearer to respond, to either go forward with the message, postpone decision or even decline the direction to which it is pointing. Either way, the hearer has no doubt about the sermon calling for a response. This is similar to Jesus' words, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves take up their cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

Again, evangelism is making faith in Jesus a possibility for a person. There is no one style for such evangelism. The Scripture says that God gifts the church with people in a variety of roles; some are prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

It would be refreshing if our seminary programs were concerned about the prophetic in a secular society and about evangelism in understanding

and identifying with people in their culture. We seem to be primarily preparing people for institutional roles as pastors and teachers with all the psychological and sociological insights we can provide. But our bias, often because someone approached us in the wrong way in what they termed evangelism, becomes an excuse for us to ignore or reject a better understanding of witness. The meaning of love should include helping people become committed disciples of Jesus.

We do not seem to emphasize missionary service today as prominently as we did 50 years ago. Carrying Western patterns into another culture rather than contextualizing the message of Christ was indeed a grave mistake. But we can learn from our mistakes and face the difficult challenge of identifying with another culture in applying the meaning of the kingdom of God in a particular setting. Donald Jacobs' book *What a Life* gives an amazing description of what it meant for him to identify with the church in Africa as a servant-leader and not be a cultural voice for the church from the West.

Once, when speaking with a faculty group on psychological counseling and aware that many in that discipline look at evangelists as naïve, I asked, "Do you distinguish between 'sin' and 'sins'?" They seemed baffled until I explained what I meant. Sin is our rebellion or estrangement from God in going our own way rather than responding to him. Sins are the wrong things we do while we are going our own way rather than God's way.

Evangelism is dealing with sin and calls people to repent of sin and turn to God. This is basic. Dealing with the sins in life is something that follows and is often the role of the pastor or counsellor. We dare not minimize evangelism to become a correction of everything. We must be realistic about this and respect what it means for one to call people to a change of relationship with God. It follows that we can then excite them about finding what this new relationship offers in the character of a new life.

If we are to be Anabaptist in the 21st century, we must rediscover the centrality of Jesus in all of life and call people to identify with him. As Paul wrote, "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Our order of life in this new relationship is to live as members of his kingdom (Colossians 1:13). And as people who live by this kingdom membership we will be a people of love, peace, justice, humble faith and faithful discipleship. We will hold ethics as our challenge to live by the example and teachings of Jesus, for the Jesus of history is the Christ of faith.

I am committed to nonviolence, but this is because I am a disciple of Jesus and not simply an advocate of pacifism. Similarly, I am committed to other kingdom values that call me to be nonconformed to the secularism, materialism and Constantinianism of our Western social, political and religious order. It is unfortunate that most of the world looks at America with its foibles and identifies it as Christian. As a global citizen, I want to reach the hand of love to people who have a different orientation and in this love seek ways of sharing with them what I hold to be the most important thing in life, discipleship of Jesus.

If we are to be Anabaptist in the 21st century we must rediscover the centrality of Jesus in all of life and call people to identify with him.

This article is an attempt to stimulate thinking on what to me is a central aspect of taking the Anabaptist vision holistically. Let's not just attach the word 'Anabaptist' on to our denominational identity or to some perspective we want to promote. Let's see this heritage as a perspective that helps us interpret both history and Scripture in the present. Our time-binding power as humans enables us to select values from Scripture and from history, our own as well as others', and channel those values into life again by the power of the Spirit.

Myron S. Augsburger is an evangelist in Harrisonburg, Va.

A reflection on Jesus' prayers at Gethsemane

Falling to the ground and praying

by Catherine Thiel Lee

Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him.—Mark 14:35 NIV
We are brought down to the dust; our bodies cling to the ground. Rise up and help us; redeem us because of your unfailing love.—Psalm 44:25-26 NIV

I was on my knees in the dirt. It was wet and cold and gray. I didn't have proper boots, so my feet were soaked through. My thick leather gloves should have offered protection, but even they were useless minutes into the task at hand. I knew the day's forecast offered no promise of sun or warmth. I could already feel a crick in my back, an ache in my thighs. I shuffled my feet through furrows, head bent, fingers moving slowly around stems and leaves.

It was a good day for staying low to the ground. I was thankful for the focus of farm work, and the weather matched my spirits. I had spent two long weekends as a chaplain at the hospital. A burn death, a family wailing in the hallway, a 13-year-old murdered by her father, a 28-week-old baby—she was perfect but too small to live: a few of 54 visits in and out of rooms during those two shifts of work. In the intervening week I read about the intersection of violence and poverty and climate change. Maybe I had faced too much death.

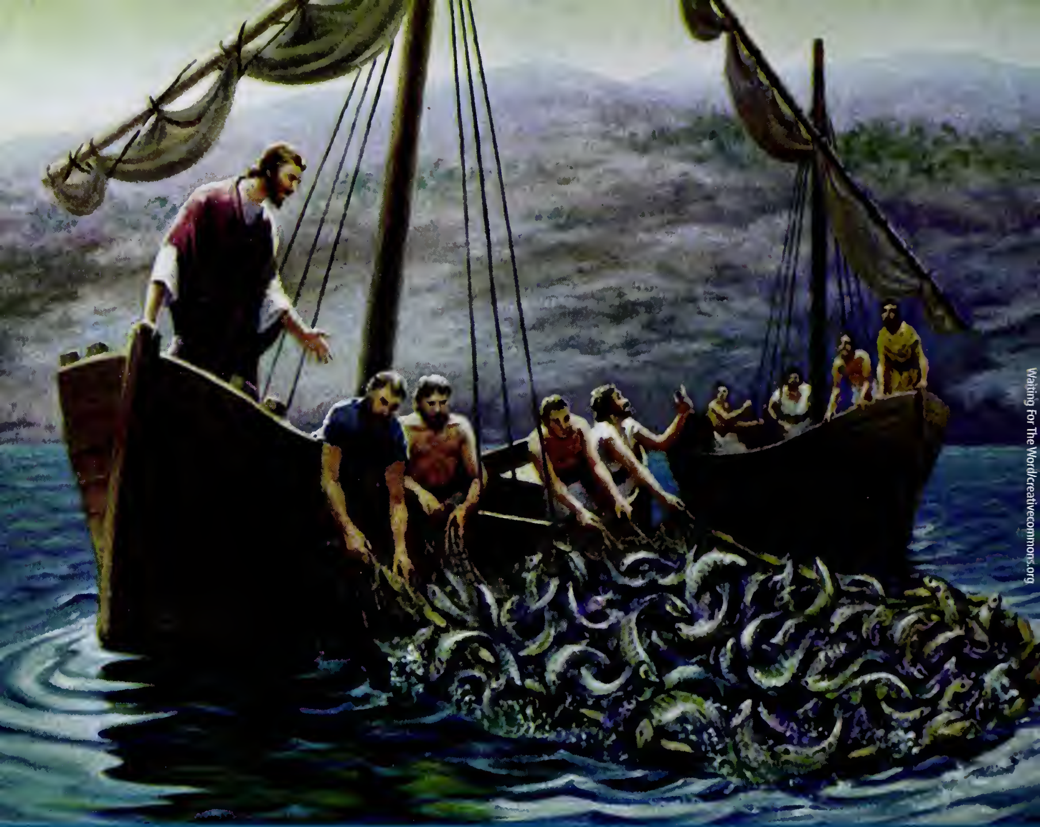
My mind was not busy, I was just working, plunging my hands into the ground as best I could manage. Grab, dig, pull. Repeat. I had no great intention of prayer.

But there, in the midst of the wet and cold and gray, I noticed. I stood up and refocused my eyes, drew a sharp breath. I was surrounded, immersed in a sea of green. Things were growing everywhere, thick and tangled. I had been tearing growth out in fistfuls, scouring the teeming ground with my soggy fingers. Things were growing between the rows, growing under the black canvas laid to block growth, growing in the quarter-inch of nutrient-forsaken clay displaced on top of the canvas.

When I fell to the ground in sorrow that December morning, I rose overwhelmed not by gray or cold or despair but by life. Life was rising up all around me in droves. Life was so abundant it had become disorderly and unwieldy. All that green growth called out to the sky, reached and stretched to God in the heavens, sunk its clambering roots down to the Creator of the mud below. Life was pulsating, spreading, filling every inch of space, every crack and crevice, even and especially the most unlikely places.

The best part: the rows I was weeding were long. This was no fleeting refection on the tenacity of life, no agrarian poetic moment. I was stuck in the muck. I continued, creeping along, crouched in the dirt for another hour, water settling further in my shoes, mud seeping through my gloves. My body clung to the ground. And it saturated me—literally—with life.

Catherine Thiel Lee is a chaplain and a regular preacher at Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Church.



Waiting For The Word/creativecommons.org

Seeing the fish

A reflection on Luke 5:1-11

by Earl Sears

William Willimon claims Jesus was thrown out of Nazareth because of his success in preaching. In Luke 5:1-11, Peter wants Jesus out of the boat because of his success at fishing. Luke 5 is a strange passage. In John this story does not come until after the Resurrection, in Chapter 21. So, what is the meaning of this story? Is it a story of the miracle of Jesus creating fish? Or is it rather instruction for how believers must learn to see after the resurrection?

Fish in the Sea of Galilee traveled in groupings or shoals. A shoal of fish could spread as wide as an acre. Imagine a solid acre of fish. Jesus may have been teaching Peter to search more carefully, to pay attention to what moves in the depths below the surface.

The Gospel of Luke, addressed to Theophilus, was the Gospel for the Gentiles. The Book of Acts, Luke's second book, records the opening of the church to the Gentiles; in other words, the kingdom must be available to the entire Gentile world.

In this fishing scene in Luke 5, Luke reminds us that believers must resee and rethink who is considered "in" and who is "out." At that time, the Jewish people segregated themselves from Gentiles in the same way we segregate ourselves in modern society. In modern society, we, too, select and label our own lesser groups of "Gentiles." We separate ourselves, certain our "Gentiles" are fodder for hell.

As the understanding of God emerged in human history, the God of the Hebrews uniquely made universal moral demands. This universal God by his very nature calls us to accept all people as fellow travelers. The stories leading up to chapter 5 in Luke foreshadow how Jesus of Nazareth was rejected by his own people, forcing him to seek followers outside his circle.

Now, in chapter 5, Simon Peter recognizes that larger spirit moving inside the words and actions of Jesus, like Moses and Isaiah also understood God's call. Both Moses and Isaiah were overwhelmed with a feeling of unworthiness in God's immediate presence. Here, Simon Peter also falls to his knees and says to Jesus, "Go away from me, for I am a sinner." A new moment in history emerges here, a new truth, if Peter and the rest are able to receive it. This bounty of fish is a call to seek deeply below the surface and a call to see in new ways.

What does this mean for us?

How we understand God and what we view as ultimately true affects how we see the world. This view shapes our understanding of issues of ecology and warfare and what we believe must be done to preserve the world for future generations. If I truly believe God cares for the entire world and not just my corner of it, I understand and live differently. Through his call, my corner relates to every corner of the world. Through his call, my family relates to all future generations, and I must use resources with all these people in mind.

But life also means I must make judgments and choices about these issues. I can act in one of at least three ways. First, I can be the agnostic and claim I really don't know anything and make choices that best fit my personal interests. Or, second, I can be the dogmatist and insist I do know everything, and no one needs to question my choice. Or third, like Simon Peter, Moses and Isaiah, I can act in faith with the clues that do exist when I am able to see them. For example, I can't prove I should love my wife. But with faith I take small steps toward intimate human loving, and in the process I discover the rich reward of a loving relationship. This relationship in turn teaches me to seek and understand the call to live in an equally loving relationship with my environment and to seek and respond to clues about caring for these resources. Love for my children and grandchildren teach me by extension to pay attention to and be personally invested in the world's future generations and to seek further what is going on beneath the surface.

If I truly believe God cares for the entire world and not just my corner of it, I understand and live differently.

This paying attention, this deeper search, is Jesus' message of radical mercy, radical forgiveness, radical self-sacrifice and radical love for one's enemies. In that first century, this new way of seeing was thought foolish by many. In Jesus' day, many thought that to act through love was weak. But the clues made visible in the Resurrection radically changed that perception, teaching the early church to live with, relate lovingly to and sacrifice for its sick neighbors. This new way of seeing gradually extended into the wider world, bringing his vision of love as the highest good and value

Madeleine L'Engle states wonderfully, "Size makes no never mind; a grain of sand is as important as a galaxy." I don't believe she (or we) would be saying that if it were not for Jesus' example. L'Engle says this because she has paid attention to what lies below the surface. Thus, this fruitful fishing trip in Luke 5 calls us to a new way of seeing, one the church and its subsequent history confirm.

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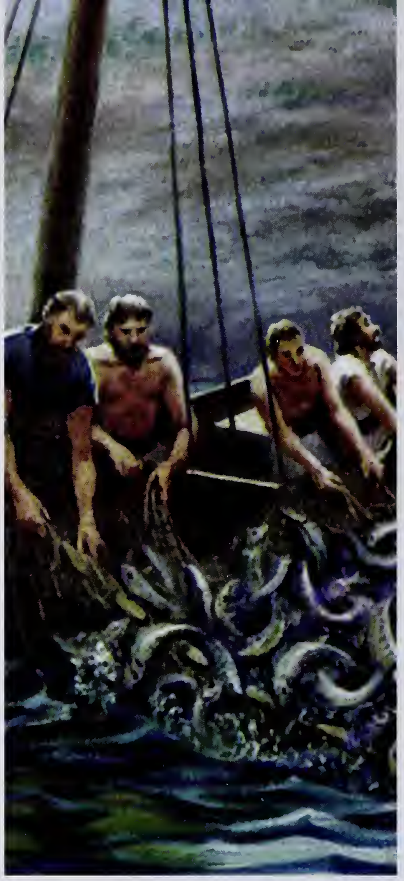


War talk has one purpose: to mask unreason and permit the game to go on.

In the United States, of course, our society at large does not choose to look below the surface of events and therefore characteristically sees through eyes of self- interest. We have seen a closed military response to all problems in the last decades. But there are clues to what lies deeper for those who are willing to see.

The United Nations has pleaded that the United States be less dependent on military force. Of course the UN can also be petty and selfish, but other countries can teach us if we are willing to see. South Africa, Uganda, East and West Germany have found less violent ways to resolve vast differences. Can we learn from clues in our world such as these? Thomas Merton, wrote this about the Vietnam War in the 1960s: "the Asian whose future we are about to decide is either a bad guy or a good guy. If he is a good guy, he is on our side and ought to be ready to die for freedom. We will provide an opportunity for him to do so: we will kill him to prevent him falling under the tyranny of a demonic enemy. Thus we not only defend his interests together with our own but we protect his virtue along with our own. Think what might happen if he fell under Communist rule and he liked it."

He goes on: "This destructive kind of logic is not in the exclusive possession of the United States. This is purely and simply the logic of power shared by all warmakers. Possibly American generals are naïve enough to push this logic, without realizing, to absurd conclusions. But all who love power tend to think in some such way. Remember Hitler weeping over the ruins of Warsaw after the Luftwaffe had demolished it? 'How wicked these people must have been, he sobbed, to make me do this to them' " (Thomas Merton, *Echoing Silence*). War talk has one purpose: to mask unreason and permit the game to go on. This is the ultimate form of an unwillingness to see.

We who have seen below the surface must insist that we as a society and we as a church look into the waters and see what is really going on. We must advocate for the clues of God's universal love, point to the waters and say: "There are fish down there. Come and see." We are often amazed when God and his love wins by less violent means, as if we are scared to death that clues offered through the Resurrection we celebrate every Easter might after all be true.

We must be courageous enough to see the fish in our sea. We must be willing and courageous enough to perceive and respond to the clues God provides to understand how to shape our world.

Earl Sears is a member of the Mennonite Congregation of Boston. This article is adapted from a sermon he gave there.

My testimony

by Valerie Serrels

It was a gradual shifting. Somewhere during our time in the mountains of the Los Padres National Forest, surrounded by pine trees, dry dirt and fundamentalist Christians, I felt an itching in my consciousness. In my soul. It began as a small itch, but over the months became an all-consuming fire.

I had become interested in peace, justice, alternative thinking, even as I guided the evangelical ministry I had started, working with youth performing dramatic mime choreographed to religious themes. The kids I worked with were mostly from conservative families, both politically and theologically. The community was small. We included patriotic pieces in our repertoire of performances, and the itch became a mauling in my soul. On the outside I directed the choreography to "God Bless the U.S.A." On the inside I questioned and mulled and tormented.

During the George W. Bush re-election, with the ongoing illegal war in Iraq, my inside and outside coalesced. Around the same time, during my hiatus from church and my search for what it meant to be a true Christ follower, I came across Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) on the Internet. I cried. Could it be real that people understood Jesus in such a way as to risk their lives to confront oppression and tyranny without violence? To stand with the most marginalized in the most dangerous places? To shred the nationalistic cloak and reach out as a citizen of the world, a citizen of the kingdom of God? I reconnected with my yearnings for God, the God I already knew in my soul but whose face and calling were changing. I was irrevocably ruined.

The sharp contrast between the Jesus I found in Scripture—who said, "love your enemy," "do good to those who harm you," "blessed are the merciful"—with the American Jesus who loves war and believes in empire and status quo-keeping could no longer be held together in my psyche. I came out of the closet. I expressed publicly my displeasure with the war and that I would not be voting for Bush.

This led to my being expelled from the ministry I had founded, which was OK, as I had planned to step down. I knew I could not take this group of youth where I was headed. But still, it felt weird to be told I was backsliding, that I could no longer be trusted in a position of leadership with their kids, by people I had come to know as friends.

My soul had become expansive. I researched more intently for some kind of foundational grounding. The thought of belonging to a church, a group of people who also sought peace, reconciliation, justice and mercy no longer seemed impossible. My research introduced me to Mennonite theology and ultimately to Eastern Mennonite University's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding, which prompted our move to Harrisonburg, Va., eight years ago.

I learned that the kingdom of God is now and is coming. It is more a worldview shift, a different paradigm, a new lens than it is an actual place. Yet it is that, too. I learned that love is real and expansive. The essence of being Christian is not about morality or being right. Love connects us to each other no matter our nationality, culture, tribe, creed, race, gender or sexual identity because we all contain the same DNA of God.

This past Veteran's Day, I gave the chapel message at my kids' Mennonite school about this very thing. I approached this holiday in a spirit of honoring veterans by imagining a future without war and dedicated it to those who have lost their lives or their souls in combat or who have taken their own lives after returning home, as a result of the trauma they experienced. Every day, 22 veterans take their own lives. That's a suicide every 65 minutes. Something essential about being human is not compatible with war.

I also dedicated it to CPT, which I credit with part of my spiritual formation and history. For CPT members who have also lost their lives and risk them every day to stand with courage and conviction without a gun, with love and with solidarity for the "enemy."

The thought of belonging to a church, a group of people who also sought peace, reconciliation, justice and mercy no longer seemed impossible.

Valerie Serrels is a member of Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.

Social change and God's faithfulness

Sarah Thompson is executive director of Christian Peacemaker Teams. Visit www.cpt.org.

I am thrilled for the opportunity to answer the call of God on my life via Christian Peacemaker Teams. Catalyzed by Ron Sider's speech at the 1984 Mennonite World Conference, CPT is an international nonprofit organization that aims to address racism, sexism, heterosexism, nationalism and economic exploitation in all its forms all around the globe by building partnerships that transform violence and oppression. Going only where we are invited, CPT works with marginalized communities in situations of lethal conflict. Currently we work alongside local peacemakers in Palestine, northern Iraq (Kurdistan), Colombia and the First Nations in Canada.

In CPT, no questions are off the table. This can make for a challenging environment in which to lead. However, facilitating spaces where people can bring all of themselves and their questions, pain and passion is important to me. CPT is full of people who participated in spirit-filled justice movements over these past decades. These efforts have demanded space for people like me—a young, single, biracial Mennonite woman—to bring all of myself and lead. I sense that people in CPT are excited about what I bring to the table because of my personal (experiences and competencies) and symbolic (social categories) position in the world. I do not take this for granted. There are not many women of color leading nonprofit organizations in the United States.

Jesus' example of challenging systems of domination has inspired CPT members to be brave and to sustain actions of solidarity.

One of CPT's project support coordinators, Rich Meyer, spoke at a chapel service at Bethany Christian High School, a Mennonite school in Goshen, Ind., about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the importance of coordinating peacemakers from different walks of life in that region. He also noted similarities between Israel's settlement of Palestine and that of the Midwest by European pioneers. He said that Potawatomi people lived on the land where our school building and campus stood. Though the majority of the Potawatomi families were killed or marched off the land (now ironically called Indiana) on the Trail of Tears, their people and culture exist today.

Until then, I saw the Potawatomi people as part of history, not the present. This helped me see connections between various struggles for justice far away and justice close to home. Most importantly, the presentation opened my eyes to recognize my own complicity and privilege as a Christian engaged in social struggles for peace, dignity and wholeness. I realized the particular ways oppression acts in my life, giving me particular vantage points and blind spots when I address global issues of violence. I knew I needed to be a part of an organization like CPT that spoke truth—however beautiful or terrifying—about our past and present as a society and as the church. My generation is looking for honest, courageous leadership.

I learned a lot about visionary leadership at Spelman College in Atlanta. There in the space that nurtured many of the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement I studied and grew. Being a scholar-activist was my operative identity; making our academic work accountable to the community and social movement was a paramount value.

That scholar-activism continued into theological training at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. I felt the church was a social movement gathered around the renewal Jesus pointed toward, the revelation he embodied and the revolution of values he called for. Jesus' example of challenging systems of domination has inspired CPT members to be brave and to sustain actions of solidarity. There have always been religious practitioners who refuse to let powerful societal forces co-opt faith and use it to pacify people, declare wars and destroy the land. CPT humbly stands in that tradition of resistance.

CPT members not only talk a lot about the big ideas of peace and justice but experiment with real world violence reduction ideas in an embodied way. Join us. The first step in CPT is to go on a delegation. These delegations are two-week learning tours where anyone who comes has a chance to experience part of the life of the CPT team and the communities of resistance. After that, delegates can choose to apply for further training with CPT and join the Corps for a three-year renewable term. CPT is a program that forms people for leadership in lifelong ministry that is incarnational and justice oriented.

From a young child sitting in the pews of Prairie Street Mennonite Church—surrounded by leaders—I have been inspired as a Christian to join others all over the world in laying aside the weapons of destruction—resting in the confidence of God's faithfulness and in the power of communities rather than in guns. TM

On changing the focus in the sexuality debate

How issues are framed often determines the outcome of the debate; and sometimes those engaged in argument discover that they are really concerned about overlapping but different aspects of the issue. We have learned in the last decade of debate that the current framing of the issues has not really advanced the dialogue. So perhaps we need to stop and examine our perspective on the question before us.

Perhaps we are asking the wrong questions. Maybe we are focusing on issues rather than people. Have the "them" we are talking about become "issues" rather than real living, breathing, loving people? Should not our concern be on the quality of relationship rather than the gender of those relating to each other? Should not our concern be about the character of the people rather than their choice of sexual mates? And to be honest, how many of us, hetero- or homosexual, are ready to have our privacy intruded upon when our intimate sexual "practices" are involved?

Maybe the sexual issue we should be most concerned about is not orientation but sexual fidelity, respect, responsibility, genuiness of love and mutual development of each other's character. Maybe the primary concern should not be about the exact possible meaning of a biblical text written thousands of years ago but its authentic application to our modern situation.

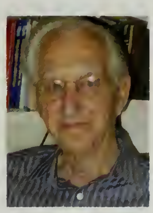
In the broader interdenominational debate about sexuality, the sticking point is clearly the definition of homosexual attraction itself as a "moral flaw." The National Association of Evangelicals statement puts it plainly—"it [homosexual orientation] is not an inherited condition in the same category as race, gender or national origin, *all of which are free from moral implications*" (italics added). When we insist that same-sex attraction in itself has "moral implications"—a claim it does not make for opposite-sex attraction—we are actually classifying it as a moral/sinful flaw, however we attempt to qualify it. Thus any same-sex love that might include sexual attraction and expression is by definition illicit, and covenant partnering is taboo. Do we want to go that far?

Denominations such as Presbyterians, Evangelical Lutherans and Episcopalians recognize the fine but crucial distinction between the honest expression of an inherited gender identity and its abusive expression. The moral question then becomes not the gender identity of covenanted partners or the physical expression of their sexual attraction (caressing, touching, kissing, massaging, intercourse) but the character or moral quality of the relationship. Just as the loving, responsible expression of a man and woman's sexual attraction is "natural" to the heterosexual majority, so the same loving, morally responsible expression of same-sex erotic attractions is "natural" to the homosexual minority. Thus, these denominations state, while marriage between males and females is normative, they recognize the right of local congregations, which have more intimate knowledge of the relationship, to "recognize and bless same-sex unions."

While there is general agreement that the biblical texts disapprove of same-sex behaviors, there seems little likelihood of arriving at unanimous agreement on the nature of that disapproval or its significance for our context. There are too many ambiguities and unknowns in the ancient biblical texts and too much disagreement in the religious community about their modern application to expect unanimity to emerge in the near future. But does not such sincere difference suggest a need for a different approach to the issues?

If we frame the question as how the institutional church should handle conflictual situations where there is genuine and passionate disagreement on the meaning and implications of Scripture texts, then the issue is not homosexuality as such, and we can search for cultural and hermeneutical precedents for resolution. This is not the first moral/sinful issue the church has dealt with in the last two centuries. It was illegal and immoral for whites to marry blacks. It was unbiblical and immoral for legally married couples to divorce. It was unbiblical and highly improper for women to usurp the role of men. It was considered immoral for both men and women to sexually advertize their bodies.

Thus far we have given little attention to an analysis of our modern situational context. We have been hesitant to give the social and psychological sciences or the actual experience of sexual minorities a place in the discussion. Thus far it has been a conversation among "us" about "what the Bible says about them." Let's at least reframe the discussion to give "them" a respected place at the table. TM



C. Norman Kraus is a member of Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.

Have the 'them' we are talking about become 'issues' rather than real living, breathing, loving people?

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Racial-ethnic leaders want expanded leadership pool

Forty-five participate in third Hope for the Future gathering.

Forty-five participants gathered in Leesburg, Va., Jan. 30-Feb. 2, for the third installment of Hope for the Future.

Hope for the Future is a gathering for Mennonite leaders of color and other Mennonite leaders to work on finding solutions for culturally appropriate leadership development.

The first meeting was held Jan. 9-11, 2011, in Tampa, Fla., and the second was held Jan. 25-27, 2013, also in Leesburg.

The first two meetings were open only to members of under-represented racial/ethnic groups (Africans, African Americans, Asians, Hispanics and Native Americans).

This year was the first time that members of the dominant culture were invited to join for part of the meeting. About 10 white leaders joined the gathering.

On the final day, the participants named three areas of focus that came out of the previous day's work. The three areas include: more networking opportunities; expanding the pool of leaders; and intentionality by "credible" leaders to ensure access to resources for leaders of color.

Regarding the need to expand the pool of leaders, Ertell Whigham, executive minister of Franconia Mennonite Conference, said, "There's a small pool of people that get overexposed."

Several participants mentioned concrete ways to expand this pool—especially for leaders of color.

These ideas include: cultivating leaders as young as high school age; keeping in touch with leaders as they transition to college and throughout their life; being sensitive to gender issues; and offering networking opportunities for young people of color.

Another theme that emerged throughout the gathering was access to the "invisible playbook"—the unwritten rules in a culture that those new to the dominant culture feel pressure to learn. Mentors and credible leaders of the dominant culture must offer insights into this playbook to minority leaders.

Iris de León-Hartshorn, director of transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA, also pointed out the significance of "being in relationship." She said she hears agencies ask, "Why don't these [minority groups] come to our events or use our material?"

de León-Hartshorn challenged the agency representatives to visit the communities and gatherings of people of color first. "Relationships have to be intentional," she said.

She provided several upcoming opportunities this year: the Native Assembly in Winnipeg, July 28-31, and the Iglesia Menonite Hispana and African-American Mennonite Associate conferences in August.

From left: Michelle Armster, executive director of Mennonite Central Committee Central States; DeVonne Harris, diverse student programs coordinator for Goshen (Ind.) College; Ewuare Osayande, anti-oppression coordinator for MCC U.S.; and Jesus Cruz, associate program director for MCC U.S., work as a table group on Jan. 31 at the Hope for the Future gathering in Leesburg, Va.

On Feb. 1, Luke Hartman called on the members of the dominant culture to move beyond acting as allies or advocates. The term ally, in particular is "over-utilized, played out, tired," he said.

Allies demonstrate support to those in the minority group, and advocates voice their responsibility to bring social change, said Hartman, who is vice president for enrollment at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

However, he asked the white leaders present to work as "agents of change" that have the "power to act to create change."

"It's more than a social relationship," he said. "[Agents] engage in strategic action designed to bring about ongoing organizational improvement."

The gathering also included times of worship led by Moniqua Acosta. Isaac Villegas, pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship, and Stanley Green, executive director of Mennonite Mission Network, offered the messages.

Villegas spoke about recognizing God in the strangers among us, as well the power in Communion.

"Jesus turns the table on 'host' and 'guest' in Communion and reminds us we are guests in God's house," he said on Feb. 2.

On Feb. 1, Green—referring to Acts 13—said that the cosmopolitan and diverse nature of the church in Antioch demonstrates God's "design for the church."

The next Hope for the Future gathering is scheduled for Jan. 22-25, 2015, with the location to be decided.—*Anna Groff*

150 Mennonite leaders call for change in policies

Letter urges leaders to make space for those who welcome sexual minorities.

A letter signed by 150 Mennonite pastors and others credentialed for ministry called for changes in Mennonite Church USA policies related to inclusion of sexual minorities in the church.

The letter urges denominational leaders to "make space for congregations and pastors who welcome and bless lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Jesus followers."

The letter was sent on Jan. 24 to Executive Board members, conference ministers and other leaders.

The letter comes as denominational leaders consider the future of church policies related to people who are gay and lesbian, churches who welcome them, and pastors who officiate at same-sex weddings.

Current policies have largely prevented people in same-sex relationships from having their call to ministry or their marriage blessed by Mennonite pastors.

However, the pastoral letter makes clear that many pastors "feel called by Christ to welcome and bless LGBT people who are seeking to follow Jesus," even though that sometimes puts them at variance with denominational guidelines.

Other signers to the letter said that while they are not prepared to act at variance to these guidelines, they "respect the discernment of [their] colleagues and seek a denomination where we can engage in the ministry to which God calls us without the threat of having credentials denied or removed or congregations sanctioned."

The letter was written and circulated by a group of six Mennonite pastors and inspired by a November 2013 column in *The Mennonite* by Ron Adams, pastor at Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church.

In that column, Adams tells how his brother, who was born gay, was rejected by a church which valued its theological purity over the love modeled by Jesus.

In the wake of his brother's suicide, Adams writes, "If I am asked to choose between adhering to [denominational] guidelines and welcoming and blessing someone, anyone, seeking to follow Jesus, I will welcome and bless."

The letter begins with the affirmation that Adams is not alone and ends with the call for policy changes.

The significantly large number of signers constitutes the biggest collection of Mennonite pastors and credentialed leaders to affirm equal treatment for those in same-sex relationships.

The continuing change of attitudes in church and society suggests that this voice will only grow larger in the coming years.

Organizers of the letter are Cynthia Lapp, pastor at Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church; Karl Shelly, pastor at Assembly Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.; Megan Ramer, pastor at Chicago Community Church; Joanna Harader, pastor at Peace Mennonite Church of Lawrence, Kan.; Theda Good, pastor at First Mennonite Church of Denver, and Chad Martin, pastor at Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster, Pa.

Organizers had this to say about their witness: "It's time the church formally recognizes that whatever consensus once existed around its teaching positions on same-sex relationships is gone," said Shelly. "The longer we fail to do so, the more the church will stay embroiled in conflict, decrease its relevancy to younger generations and continue to inflict harm on LGBT Christians and itself."

"Some may ask, Why now? for a letter like this," said Martin. "We feel called to remind the church that treating LGBT members and their advocates justly and including them at all levels of church life is not simply the cause of a few fringe pastors or conferences. Many, many pastors across geographic and conference boundaries care deeply about Mennonite Church USA becoming a more inclusive, hospitable and safe place for LBGT people of faith."

> Many, many pastors across geographic and conference boundaries care deeply about Mennonite Church USA becoming a more inclusive, hospitable and safe place for LBGT people of faith.—Chad Martin

"This letter was written out of love for the church, not defiance," said Lapp. "We understand the strength of the Mennonite church to be the body of Christ, where all parts are needed and available for service. We affirm this one body with many members; we affirm Christ's love as our greatest gift; and in raising our concerns, we remain committed to bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, and enduring all things in love."

"Our congregation would be a spiritually poorer place without the active participation of people who identify as LGBT," said Ramer. "And the same is true of our denomination. An increasing number of congregations have begun to affirm that the Holy Spirit falls on gay and straight alike. Who are we to withhold God's blessing?"—*Inclusive Mennonite Pastors leadership team*

Executive Board releases statement on LBGT inclusion

Much of its meeting is spent in executive session.

The Mennonite Church USA Executive Board (EB) spent many hours in executive session working on a statement regarding the inclusion of members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community in Mennonite Church USA. The EB met Feb. 13-15 at Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.

The statement (see box) is primarily in response to the recent December 2013 decision of Mountain States Mennonite Conference to license Theda Good, a pastor at First Mennonite Church in Denver.

The EB spent approximately seven of the 16 meeting hours in executive session.

Executive sessions are closed to the church press, including *The Mennonite*, unless the publication's editor agrees to allow the Mennonite Church USA executive director and moderator to make final edits before the article is published.

The EB policy states: "The [Executive Board] reserves the right to review the reports of church media before they are published to assure that they honor the board's policies regarding the quoting of individual board member opinions versus the stating of explicitly stated board decisions."

The amount of time in executive sessions in at this meeting is "an unusual move which that draws sharp criticism from our church press," wrote Stutzman in his report.

"The main purpose for these sessions is to invite a maximum sense of safety for board members to express themselves," he wrote. "Eventually, we hope to find a better way to balance the competing needs for both emotional safety on the board [and] independent reporting to the church."

Stutzman also shared that he has received more than 200 responses to the Mountain States decision "across the ideological spectrum, with a majority disagreeing with the Mountain States action." He said he responded with a personal message to each, and some of these responses led to several exchanges.

"There is no visible path forward which that could unify all the respondents. To show the range of sentiments. ... I will share a number of the comments," Stutzman wrote.

The EB met with Loren Swartzendruber, Eastern Mennonite University, Va., president in executive session to discuss the listening process of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, about its policy on hiring LGBT employees.

According to reporting in the open sessions, the executive sessions included times of deep sharing, and many board members had emotional reactions to the process.

In other news, on Feb. 14, the EB held a review with MennoMedia executive director Russ Eanes, and MennoMedia board chair Lee Schmucker. These leaders described the movement of MennoMedia from financial survival mode to new growth.

Eanes also outlined several changes in the publishing industry that he foresees in the next five years. He said MennoMedia needs to be "agile" in this fast-moving industry.

The following board members did not attend the meeting due to weather conditions, but they did participate by phone: Samuel Voth Schrag, Charlotte Hardt, Yvonne Diaz, Kenneth Thompson and Nisha Subaiya Springer.—*Anna Groff*

Excerpt from EB statement

Mountain States Mennonite Conference's actions expressed the hope of many across the church who desire full inclusion for our LGBT brothers and sisters across the church. Yet the area conference's decision has exacerbated the polarities within our church and frayed the fragile strands of accountability that hold our church together in an emotionally charged political atmosphere. This begs the larger question of the best ways to tend the relationships between congregations, area conferences and the denomination.

Because a ministry credential leading to ordination is potentially transferable to any other area conference, we believe Mountain States Mennonite Conference acted without sufficient counsel from the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) and the Conference Ministers' group. Therefore, we request that First Mennonite Church of Denver and the area conference seek such counsel before moving from the licensing process into the next step of ordination.

Further, we have appointed a task force comprising members of the CLC and the Executive Board to review the actions of Mountain States Mennonite Conference as they bear on our life together. The task force will do so in keeping with the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA and the area conference's stated commitments when it joined Mennonite Church USA in 2005. The members of the task force are Patricia Shelly, moderator-elect and co-chair of the CLC; David Boshart, member of the Executive Board and CLC; and two or three additional persons to be appointed by the Executive Board. The task force has been asked to focus a question for discussion and a recommendation for a process of decision-making to the CLC at its March meeting. Communication to the task force may be addressed to ShelleyB@MennoniteUSA.org.

... We request that, after the March meeting of the CLC, the task force bring the results of their review to the June Executive Board meeting, along with specific recommendations for action.

To see the full statement, go to www.themennonite.org.

What happened in executive session

Excerpts from the Executive Board's news release

Moderator Elizabeth Soto Albrecht of Lancaster, Pa., opened the Feb. 13-15 meeting in Harrisonburg, Va., by exhorting the Executive Board to be communities of grace to one another.

"Mennonite Church USA is not a perfect church; it is a messy church," she said. "We are a bunch of people trying to make sense of God's grace. This weekend we must listen, listen and listen to one another and to members across Mennonite Church USA."

EB members modeled their work together on principles of discernment suggested by Ruth Haley Barton: preparing and gathering information; putting themselves in a position to listen for God's guidance; and discerning God's will together. They were also joined by a facilitator, David Brubaker from Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, who helped guide the conversations.

The board began by sharing their personal perspectives on the actions taken by Mountain States Mennonite Conference and EMU (see page 34). The opinions stated spanned a broad spectrum. Some board members expressed disappointment that the board and staff did not process these decisions with the area conference and university before they were announced. The EB also read and listened to the words of individuals across the church who sent letters and emails urging the board to take action in response to the recent decisions by Mountain States Mennonite Conference and EMU. These represented a wide range of opinions.

"What does it mean to come as a board member representing the whole—a whole that includes a broad diversity of opinions?" said Dick Thomas, past moderator and current board member from Lancaster, Pa. "We need to trust the Lord to help us make changes we need to make in time to be relevant and in a way that allows us to get there together."

The executive committee of the board then presented a proposed statement for the board members to consider, encouraging them to take the statement with them overnight and to spend time in prayer discerning God's leading. Over the course of the next two days, board members offered feedback and counsel to the Executive Committee. The statement underwent three revisions before the board approved a final version. While the statement had broad support across the EB, it did not pass unanimously.

The board wrestled with the task of responding to concerns expressed by LGBT brothers and sisters while also tending to relationships with all parts of the church as expressed in written covenants of mutual accountability.

"We need to own all the tears and the anger that have gone into these conversations and honor them," said Soto Albrecht. "We are called to represent the whole of Mennonite Church USA, and that's not easy."

The final statement (see page 34) calls for the creation of a listening task force to review the process by which Mountain States Mennonite Conference decided to license Theda Good, and to examine the ways these actions interface with the existing membership guidelines and polity documents of Mennonite Church USA.

The board also met with Loren Swartzendruber, president of EMU in Harrisonburg, and Carlos Romero, executive director of Mennonite Education Agency, to learn more about EMU's listening process regarding the hiring of faculty and staff members who are in committed same-sex relationships. Swartzendruber said that after listening to voices from across the church, he and the EMU cabinet will bring a recommendation to EMU's board. The EB urged Swartzendruber to stay in close consultation with Romero and MEA as the process moves forward.

During the meeting, the board also affirmed the release of a revised statement on immigration justice, which delegates called for at the Phoenix convention in July 2013. —*Mennonite Church USA staff*

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Passion for vacation Bible school inspires young leaders

Church in Bolivia develops children and youth discipleship programs.

Linda Shelly

Elena Salas, Ana María Roca, and Basilia Toro Orellana practice making origami animals at the Equipo Sirviendo a Cristo workshop in November 2013. They'll later teach origami to children at vacation Bible school.

Nearly 30 neighborhood children gathered for a week in December 2013—a summer month in Bolivia—at Josué Roman Cavero's home, where he and his mother organized a vacation Bible school (VBS).

In addition to the week-long session at his house, Josué, who is 14, helped lead two other VBS sessions. He traveled as far as 90 minutes by bus each way to help bring Bible lessons to the children.

Josué started as a VBS student at a young age, but last year he decided to take more responsibility and start training to lead the VBS. He attended the youth leadership workshop Equipo Sirviendo a Cristo (Serve Christ Team), which the Bolivia Mennonite Church offers.

"I loved that I got to learn about Jesus and Moses [during VBS]," says Josué. "I like to share the Word of God, and now that I'm old enough, I wanted to learn how to teach the kids."

Margrit Kipfer Barrón, a mission worker with Mennonite Mission Network and Schweizerische Mennonitsche Mission (Swiss Mennonite Mission), helps organize the youth discipleship workshops and VBS for the Bolivian churches. She sees these children and youth sessions as an important step in the formation of strong spiritual lives. Mennonite Mission Network helps fund both the youth and children's programs.

When she started working in Bolivia in 1994, Kipfer Barrón wanted to start youth camps like she had enjoyed during her childhood. However, the Bolivian church leaders told her that camps would not work in Bolivia at that time because of their high cost. Instead, she chose to start VBS, since they could achieve the same goals for less money. The church has since added camp experiences.

In order to train more VBS leaders, Kipfer Barrón and the Bolivian church developed the Equipo Sirviendo a Cristo leadership workshops in 2006. During these classes, the youth study Scripture so that they aren't just reciting the curriculum. Then they learn kid-friendly ways to communicate the message.

There are two workshops each year during the semester breaks. Forty participants came to the week-long session last November. Thirty of these youth helped during at least one session of VBS; some helped in four sessions. Last December, 13 VBS sessions reached about 700 children.

Kipfer Barrón sees the youth leadership classes as a place for youth to mature in their spiritual lives. It is their first step as leaders in the church.

"[Josué] is a very young leader yet, but he is showing a lot of dedication to the work of the Lord," says Kipfer Barrón.

Although it may sound daunting to lead a Bible school as a young teen, the youth are slowly encouraged to participate in ways they are comfortable.

"First, they'll help more experienced leaders by handing out pencils and keeping track of attendance, but the next year they might start teaching a Bible lesson, and as years go by they become more responsible," says Kipfer Barrón.

Gabriela Hurtado Vargas, who is 20 years old, first came to VBS with her siblings when she was about 7 because she was drawn to the snacks. But soon she realized she had lots of fun interacting with the other kids and learning about the Bible.

Once she got older, she wanted to help with the children because she enjoyed teaching and interacting with kids. First, she helped with Sunday school classes, and now she has attended the youth leadership classes for three years.

"[I get to show them] the love that comes from a life with Christ," says Gabriela. "I want to reach the children to plant the seed so that when they're older, they remember and don't stray from God."

Kipfer Barrón sees the youth and children's programs as an opportunity to share the gospel with children and help prepare them to make good decisions when they are older.

"It is always a joy to see young people and teenagers growing in their spiritual life," says Kipfer Barrón. "[They move] from listening to becoming servants and leaders. This motivates me to go on with the ministry."—*Sara Alvarez of Mennonite Mission Network*

AMBS–Great Plains to close extension site

AMBS board to act on recommendation in meeting this month

The advisory board of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary–Great Plains Extension took action at its Jan. 23 meeting to recommend closing the extension site on June 30. The AMBS board will take formal action on this recommendation this month.

"This was a difficult decision after a long process of evaluation, but in the end there was strong consensus among board members that this was the appropriate next step," said Tom Harder, chair of the advisory board.

Dorothy Nickel Friesen accepted two major tasks when she began a one-year assignment as interim director in July 2013. One was to help the board evaluate the current site and future possibilities; the other was to put renewed energy into recruitment and fund-raising.

To facilitate the assessment of AMBS–Great Plains, Nickel Friesen initiated an extensive process that included a survey of constituents in the region and focus groups.

The response rate of 44 percent showed strong interest in the site and affirmation for its services. Most respondents asserted that quality theological education is crucial, though only a small number said they intended to take classes at AMBS–Great Plains in the near future.

Enrollment in courses has declined for several years, and in spite of increased recruitment efforts this year, enrollment of both credit and audit students remained flat or declined.

Students in the area have more options available to them, such as the new Master of Divinity Connect distance program and more online and hybrid courses offered from the main AMBS campus.

The advisory board reviewed the research findings, the history of AMBS–Great Plains, current trends in enrollment and changes in delivery systems.

They also reviewed the trend in annual budget deficits for the site resulting from lower enrollments. They concluded that closing the extension site was the appropriate next step.

The board made this decision with gratitude for the significant education and nurture that has taken place through the extension site and its predecessor, the Great Plains Seminary Education Program, which began in 1980 as a conference-based initiative co-sponsored by Western District and South Central conferences.

Board members recognized the strong history of this significant resource for the church and that this decision was both an opportunity for celebration and cause for sadness.

Although the research showed low interest in extension site master's-level courses, it also showed strong interest for continuing education and resources to refresh and renew ministry.

Workshops and seminars are already available from higher education institutions and faith-based organizations in the area, including Bethel (KIPCOR), Tabor (Hillsboro, Kan.) and Hesston (Kan.) colleges, Prairie View and Mennonite Central Committee.

How AMBS might continue to serve people in the Great Plains area is still to be determined by AMBS administrators in consultation with others in the region.

A closing celebration of AMBS–Great Plains will be held June 1 at Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton, Kan.

Serving on the AMBS–Great Plains advisory board are Tom Harder, Sara Dick, Katherine Goerzen, Mark Jantzen, Anita Yoder Kehr, Tim Lichti, John C. Murray, Becky Nickel, Jim Ostlund, Clarence Rempel, Kathy Neufeld Dunn and Bill Zuercher. Rebecca Slough, academic dean, is the AMBS administrator liaison to the advisory board.

AMBS–Great Plains became an extension site of AMBS in July 2002. Lois Barrett served as director of the site for 11 years; she continues to serve as AMBS professor of theology and Anabaptist studies.—*AMBS*

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Congregational leaders look at discernment

340 attend School for Leadership Training at Eastern Mennonite Seminary.

Lindsey Kolb

Ruth Haley Barton addresses Eastern Mennonite Seminary's annual School for Leadership Training Jan. 20-22.

Hundreds of people filled to capacity the 2014 School for Leadership Training Jan. 20-22 at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va., interested in exploring "discernment processes" to address difficult issues in congregations, conferences and denominations.

"Discernment together begins with love for one another and is informed by knowledge and insight," said keynote speaker Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA. "We put the interests of others above ourselves, yielding ourselves to the group and to God. If we already know the answer, we are not in the place of discernment."

Under the topic "Discerning Together, Shaping the Future," the seminary's annual leadership school attracted a record number of 340 registrants, who could partake of 15 workshops and talks.

The topic had gained momentum in the previous few months within Mennonite Church USA congregations and conferences, partly fueled by two developments: (1) Eastern Mennonite University's announcement of a six-month listening process regarding hiring practices for noncelibate homosexuals and (2) a decision by Mountain States Conference to license a pastor in a committed same-sex relationship.

The pressing need for discernment on same-sex questions was broached in a surprisingly touching way, with an "elephant in the room" worship service in which participants quietly offered their fears and hopes to God in a ritual that brought tears to the eyes of many.

One of the featured speakers, Ruth Haley Barton—author, teacher and founder of the Transforming Center in Wheaton, Ill.—described discernment as 75 percent preparation, 25 percent practice. "A common mistake in discernment processes is to take undiscerning individuals and expect them to be discerning," she said. "Just because a person is a successful lawyer or business owner does not mean they have the skills for discernment. Discernment begins with spiritually formed leaders who are intentionally attuned to the Holy Spirit."

Barton said that corporate discernment needs leaders who spend time in prayer, Scripture, solitude, self-examination and their own personal discernment. These leaders should share with each other their individual experiences of discernment as they prepare for corporate discernment.

"No matter what else we do," said Barton, "we exist to do the will of God." She said discerning leaders are able to pray the prayer of indifference, being willing to let go of their own agenda in order to seek God's will.

"Spiritual discernment is a concrete activity that opens us to what is beyond ourselves," Barton said. "Many aspects of God's will are already clear, like unity, love, truthtelling, kindness, respect and confession of sin. These serve as guiding principles and values for discernment."

Barton outlined a process for discernment in meetings that is very different from secular models of decision-making, such as Roberts Rules of Order.

"Discernment is like standing outside before the sun comes up," said Ervin Stutzman. "You see something in the distance. Is it a dog? Is it a coyote? Is it a wolf? You need to shed light to distinguish what it is. Discernment is seeking the light to distinguish what is best."

Barton and Stutzman agreed that the process begins with information gathering, as with most decision-making processes. However, the group then spends time listening to God and to each other through honest sharing, listening, prayer and time spent in silence.

Often, according to Barton, the time spent in intentional silence is key to the decision-making process. "After 30 minutes of silence, when each member of the group spends time seeking God, often a way forward emerges," said Barton.

"If the group is ready to respond, each member is asked to voice their level of agreement, either completely agree, agree with some reservations, don't agree but will defer to the process of the group, or don't agree at all. If people don't agree, then the process begins again. Unity is the marker that God's will is being done."

"Discernment processes can be difficult, messy and very painful," said Stutzman. "But they can also be very rewarding and exciting."—*Laura Lehman Amstutz of Eastern Mennonite Seminary*

Five perspectives to seeing Jesus at Pastors Week

Five AMBS professors explore theme 'Help me see Jesus! Help me see, Jesus!'

The Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary "Fab Five" aren't a band of superheroes who can remove snow and raise frigid temperatures, but they did help participants to see Jesus Jan. 27–30 at Pastors Week in Elkhart, Ind.

AMBS planners questioned whether to go ahead with the event, as snowfall and below-zero temperatures led to winter emergencies in the area. Nevertheless, 157 participants encountered five different points of view on the theme "Help me see Jesus! Help me see, Jesus!"

Presenters Andy Brubacher Kaethler, Rachel Miller Jacobs, Safwat Marzouk, Jamie Pitts and Allan Rudy-Froese are each in their second or third year of teaching at AMBS. They took on the challenge of helping participants see Jesus anew and allowing Jesus to help them see in new ways.

Pitts, associate professor of Anabaptist studies, opened the week with reflections on baptism. He drew parallels among the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, Jesus' baptism and our own baptisms. The Israelites' passage through the water "changed their vision of God and of the world. It changed them and their way of being in the world," he said. Jesus entered the Jordan River for his baptism, "leaving behind his artisan's work and emerging with a vision of the Spirit that led him to an itinerant ministry."

Right seeing also involves seeing our contexts and the culture in which we live, said Andy Brubacher Kaethler, assistant professor of Christian formation and culture. He pointed out that when we do not examine our own culture and the way it shapes our reading of the Bible, we risk being blind to God's liberating, reconciling work in the world.

Kaethler argued that humans are not primarily rational beings, but "we are liturgical. … We are first and foremost loving creatures." That human capacity for love is expressed in practices and habits that are often counter to our culture.

Jacobs, assistant professor of congregational formation, also challenged participants to a new way of thinking when studying the Bible in congregations. Instead of feeling that we or our congregations lack knowledge or time for Bible teaching and study, she said, we should approach the Bible with a spirit of "enoughness."

She encouraged pastors to follow Jesus' example of living and teaching with a sense of abundance and vulnerability. Rather than bringing our preconceived ideas to the text, can we "see ourselves in conversation with the text and in conversation with each other through the power of the Holy Spirit?" Can we trust the "enoughness" of the people gathered around the Scripture, Jacobs asked, even if that means we sit quietly until the Holy Spirit gives us ideas?

Marzouk, assistant professor of Old Testament, led the group in a study of the story of Sara, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac as a way of exploring identity—how we see ourselves and others. The story often is read in a way in which self and other are binary opposites, he noted. Readers identify with Sara and Isaac, viewing them as positive and superior, while Hagar and Ishmael are seen as inferior, defiant or something to be resisted.

Marzouk pointed out, however, that Ishmael is neither an outsider nor an insider in God's promises. His identity is complex; he is both Israelite and Egyptian yet neither fully Israelite nor Egyptian.

For Christians, too, there is an in-between identity, and recognizing this is important. "We are called to be disciples in this world but not of this world. We live in the already, not yet," Marzouk said. Focusing on Jesus calls us to expose the oppression we inflict on others and experience from others.

Helping others see Jesus through preaching was the challenge Allan Rudy-Froese, assistant professor of Christian proclamation, worked with. To prepare for preaching, Rudy-Froese called participants to do two things. First they must prepare their bodies, recognizing that the whole body is involved in speaking and that rehearsal is important for the preacher just as it is for the choir and soloists. Second, preachers must allow themselves to receive a gift from Christ in their study and preparation.

"If we don't get the gift ourselves, we won't preach it either. If we have not seen Christ, how can we help others see Christ? If we cannot see how Christ is carrying us, how can we say to others that Christ is carrying them?" he said.

Worship services were led by Cyneatha Millsaps, pastor of Community Mennonite Church, Markham, Ill., and Janeen Bertsche Johnson, AMBS campus pastor. Julia Gingrich, AMBS student, drew on her experience as a pastoral intern at the St. James African Methodist Episcopal Church in Elkhart during the summer and how she had learned to see in new ways.—*Mary E. Klassen of AMBS*

Jason Bryant

Presenters were Allan Rudy-Froese, Rachel Miller Jacobs, Jamie Pitts, Safwat Marzouk and Andy Brubacher Kaethler.

Called to witness and healing

Mennonites participate in hearings on Indigenous boarding schools.

Melissa Knapp

Sainty Morris, a member of the Saanich Nation, tells Truth and Reconciliation Commissioners and the public about the years of personal turmoil that followed years of residential school at hearings held Sept. 18-21, 2013, in Vancouver, British Columbia. Photo provided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Last fall, a delegation of eight Mennonites attended hearings in Vancouver, British Columbia, to listen to stories of the trauma inflicted on Indigenous people through Indian Residential Schools—active from the late 19th century into the 20th century—to honor the survivors and to acknowledge the participation of the former General Conference Mennonite Church (GCMC) in this traumatic history.

Representatives from Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) joined representatives of Indigenous and settler communities from across North America for the hearings, which were held Sept. 18-21, 2013, and organized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada (www.trc.ca). (The former GCMC was a U.S.-Canadian denomination prior to the formation of Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada as separate denominations in the early 2000s).

“Often, people just aren’t aware of the Mennonite involvement in this history,” says Steve Heinrichs, Treaty One (Winnipeg, Manitoba), director of Indigenous Relations for Mennonite Church Canada. “To be present for healing and help provide awareness, all within a safe space, was a tremendous sign of the Spirit’s movement throughout the week.”

“The church and its members must continue to listen to and learn about the specifics of our ancestors’ actions and of the history that is tied to the land we live on across North America,” he added.

A shared responsibility

The Indian Residential Schools in Canada and their U.S. counterparts—known as Indian Boarding Schools—were th institutional means through which each government attempted to erase Indigenous culture from its national landscape, says Colleen McFarland, Goshen, Ind., director of archives and records management for Mennonite Church USA and a participant in the delegation. In these schools, she says, Indigenous people were stripped of their native language, cultural identity and familial relations. Many survivors report having experienced repeated instances of severe abuse and neglect within the schools.

According to McFarland, more than 130 Indian Residential Schools were in operation in Canada, with more than 150,000 children in attendance. The government began to close the schools in the 1970s, but the last school remained in operation until 1996. Nearly all the schools were government supported and church run. Heinrichs says two were run by Mennonites, although they were not directly associated with the former GCMC. Other Mennonites were involved in the system as teachers in United Church residential schools, day schools and boarding homes, he says

McFarland says varied sources estimate that in the United States, more than 100,000 children were subjected t residential schools. Three schools were administered by th former GCMC—in Darlington, Okla. (1881); Cantonment, Okla. (1883); and Halstead, Kan. (1884). It’s also recorded that in the 1890s, Mennonite missionaries conducted Sunday school in the government day school on the Hopi reservation in northeastern Arizona.

“We [Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada] have separate histories but a shared responsibility, says Iris de León-Hartshorn, Portland, Ore., director of transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA an a member of the delegation. “In Canada, the residential schools were mandated by the government for three generations. In the United States, they were implemented but not fully mandated. The implications for the church are differen for each country.”

Creating space for witness and healing

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was established with funds from the 2008 settlement of a class-action suit brought against the Canadian government by residential school survivors, regularly hosts forums across Canada to provide education about the residential school system, give voice to the experience of former students an their families, and acknowledge the ongoing trauma and impact of the institutions within communities.

The Mennonite delegation included Mennonite Church USA representatives de León-Hartshorn; McFarland; Carol Roth of Clinton, Miss., with Native Mennonite Ministries;

For further reading

- *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* by David Wallace Adams (University Press of Kansas,1995)
- *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* by Brenda L. Child (University of Nebraska Press, 2000)
- *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry: Conversations on Creation, Land Justice and Life Together* by Steve Heinrichs (Herald Press, 2013).
- Mennonite Church Canada also has published a study guide and reflection curriculum to accompany this collection of reflections on creation and faith in the face of cultural exploitation and historical trauma from writers of diverse backgrounds.

and Dick Davis, conference minister of Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference. Heinrichs represented Mennonite Church Canada. Harley Eagle, Winnipeg, coordinator of Indigenous Work for MCC Canada; Erica Littlewolf, Albuquerque, N.M., Indigenous Vision Center coordinator for MCC Central States; and Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz, Akron, Pa., restorative justice coordinator for MCC U.S., represented MCC. (Heinrichs notes that members of the British Columbia Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches also were present and served at the Inter-Mennonite table in the Learning Area.)

Each day of the gathering opened with morning prayers and offered forums and listening spaces for survivors to engage one another, provide statements of their experiences and share ideas about how to turn reconciliation into action for the generations to come.

"I heard numerous firsthand stories of the abuse and how it has had intergenerational effects," says Littlewolf. "To be in the presence of such courage, healing and will to survive is to witness greatness. I have internalized a great responsibility to respect those stories, to continue learning from them, to apply my knowledge and to commit to my own healing."

De León-Hartshorn reflected on listening to survivors on the first day of the hearings. "To hear the 'Grannies' speak was inspirational," she says. "Even though they had experienced such hardship and abuse, they spoke in a way that exhibited love."

Participants also attended discussions on the importance of memories and the role the arts can play in healing.

"We were honored to be witnesses to the stories told, the tears that fell and the righteous anger expressed," de León-Hartshorn says. "A chance for a better future lies in the courage to tell and face the truth as people of the Creator."

The TRC gathering also included a Church Listening Area. In this space, which was available daily, representatives from the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, the Presbyterian Church and the United Churches of Canada were present to acknowledge their denomination's role in this history and to listen to stories of survivors who were directly impacted by the church's forebears. At the Vancouver gathering, representatives from Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Church Canada were present in this space for the first time.

"We were deeply moved by the stories and responses as deep hurt, shame and lament were shared around the talking circle between the Christian church and survivors of residential schools," de León-Hartshorn says.

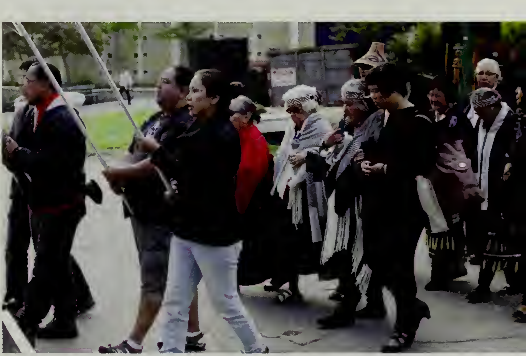
'Healing for all of us'

"Residential schools are just one part of the legacy of colonization," says Heinrichs. "To address land justice, we must also look at the Doctrine of Discovery, which paved the way for exploitative systems like the residential schools."

The Doctrine of Discovery is a series of papal bulls issued in the late 15th century that deemed lands inhabited by non-Christians to be "empty" and thus available to be claimed by Christian monarchs. The World Council of Churches—an international, ecumenical faith organization that was critical in overturning apartheid in South Africa—denounced the doctrine in February 2012, calling the nature of the doctrine "fundamentally opposed to the gospel of Jesus."

Ultimately, the journey of healing is both international and personal, says Littlewolf: "If we are to heal collectively, we need to recognize that we need healing in ourselves and that the institutions and systems we are in also need healing. Healing isn't for other people; it is for all of us. It is a choice that we have to embrace and work toward together."—*Jenn Carreto for Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada*

Melissa Knapp



Former residential school students lead the way to the opening ceremonies of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission national event in Vancouver, British Columbia. Photo provided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Mennonites celebrate art in Cincinnati

Artists talk about the process of creating their work: visual, music, writing.

J. Daniel Hess

The Steel Wheels, a bluegrass band from the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, perform at the Mennonite Arts Weekend.

This year's Mennonite Arts Weekend (MAW), held Feb. 7-9 in Cincinnati, brought together 244 Mennonite artists and participants and addressed the theme "Touching Mystery."

The event, supported by the members of Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship, began in 1992 with the purpose of gathering together Mennonite artists to reclaim their identities as artists and their relationship with the church. Every two years since, the three-day event has been held in Cincinnati for one weekend in February.

Irma Fast Dueck, a theologian and worship planner from Winnipeg, Manitoba, spoke of the difficulty pastors and theologians encounter in expressing the mystery of God in words. "That," she said, "is why we need the artists."

Presenting artists included playwright and actor Ted Swartz, poet Jean Janzen and painter Randall Stoltzfus, among others. MAW, which values diversity in art forms, also featured the Steel Wheels, a bluegrass band from the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. They provided musical entertainment, blending their four-piece string band with four-part harmonies inspired by their Mennonite heritage.

The lead guitarist and vocalist, Trent Wagler, told about his grandfather, who started a band in secret, since musical instruments were prohibited by the church.

"It's a beautiful justice to play a banjo in church," Wagler said, in response to his grandfather's experience.

The presenting artists shared their stories about finding a role for their voice and contributions in a community that has restricted the arts in the past.

Hal Hess, chairperson of MAW since 1996, said the idea for it was born in the 1980s, when a member of Cincinnati Mennonite Fellowship proposed that the congregation do something in celebration of the arts.

"The idea lay dormant until several of us attended the 1989 Mennonite conference in Normal, Ill.," Hess said. "At that conference, an ad hoc meeting called for a gathering of those interested in the arts."

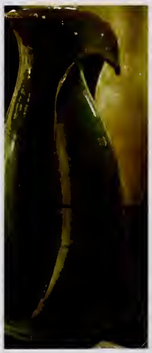
They anticipated classroom-sized attendance—not anywhere near the number that came, which exceeded 300. Two main themes emerged: the desire for artists to connect with other artists and the need to welcome back artists who felt alienated by the Mennonite church.

Ann Hostetler, a professor of English at Goshen (Ind.) College, attended the first MAW in 1992. The revelation that other Mennonite poets existed inspired her to begin editing a collection of their work, which turned into her book *A Cappella: Mennonite Voices in Poetry*.

In the earlier years, MAW held panel discussions about whether or not art had a place in worship. But now, Hostetler said, there is much more affirmation for the arts in congregations, so this issue is no longer contested.

Today, MAW emphasizes making art and being a creator. The event focuses on all the disciplines, from poetry and jewelry to percussion and liturgical dance.

The visual arts had a strong presence this year, with six presenters and a gallery full of pottery, paintings and collages. The weekend has gradually broadened to include not only representational art but abstract art, such as the textile art of Karen Thiessen, the paintings of Randall Stoltzfus and the enameled jewelry of Kristina Glick.



J. Daniel Hess

Ceramic art by Karen Glick

Glick, a professor of art at Goshen College, spoke about her artistic journey. Until graduate school, when she began working with metal and enameling, Glick had difficulty discerning what she loved to do. She struggled with indecision until she decided, "I'm just going to play." Glick was inspired by the artistic process and the natural objects around her, and she collected everything from found steel and gravel to snail shells and magnolia seed pods.

"Process is a beautiful thing, both visually and in the action," Glick said.

Sarah Boyts Yoder, a mixed media artist from Charlotteville, Va., also presented her work. "Everything is con-

J. Daniel Hess

Marilyn Houser Hamm leads hymn singing at the Mennonite Arts Weekend, held Feb. 7-9 in Cincinnati.

nected, and everything is fair game for inspiration," she said. She works with both traditional media—oil paint—and untraditional media—latex house paint and gel pens.

Eric Kaufmann, founder of the Clay Artist Guild in Goshen, gave a live demonstration on the potter's wheel. He specializes in crystalline glazed porcelain and stoneware.

Randall Stoltzfus, an artist from Brooklyn, N.Y., creates large-scale abstract oil paintings that feature circular mark-making and the illusion of light.

"I spend crazy amounts of time making these paintings," Stoltzfus said. He paints by hand each of the tiny circles that are characteristic of his work. He presented a time-lapse video that showed the progression of one of his paintings over a seven-month period.

When it comes to inspiration, Stoltzfus said, "You learn over time to cultivate it—it's like gardening." As a former country boy who grew up on a Virginia farm, he sees the remnants of his upbringing in his love for his rooftop garden and his black-and-white "Amish" inkjet printer.

Karen Thiessen also pays attention to detail. A textile and mixed-media collage artist from Ontario, Thiessen creates works with thousands of dense, tiny stitches.

"Already at age 3, I knew I was an artist," she said.

Inspired by her Russian Mennonite history, she transforms everyday objects and humble materials into objects of art and beauty. "Nothing is ever a total failure," she said.

When she developed an allergy to the chemical dye she used to color her textiles, Thiessen began using natural dyes, like red onion skins, rust and even blood.

"Yeah, I used mine," she said offhandedly.

Jean Janzen, who Ted Swartz called "the mother of Mennonite poetry," revealed that she got a tattoo just before her 80th birthday. The word "beloved" is tattooed above her ankle on the inside of her leg. "I was finally realizing ... that I was beloved on this earth," she said.

Janzen, who has authored six collections of poems, read selections from her poetry and her recent memoir, *Entering the Wild: Essays on Faith and Writing* (2012). She spoke about the role of joy in worship.

"It's hard to take the time to laugh when you're working so hard," she said, referring to the strong Mennonite work ethic. "I want to laugh a lot before I die."

Judy Clemens of Ottowa, Ohio, spoke about navigating a secular industry—mystery books—as a Mennonite writer. The author of the Stella Crown mystery series, she presented a workshop called "Get those People Out of Your Head and onto Paper," about developing fictional characters.

Like most Mennonite events, the weekend included hymn singing. Marilyn Houser Hamm, from Altona, Manitoba, led everyone in a variety of hymns, from fugues and sambas to traditional Mennonite hymns. She and Jim Clemens, a composer, also spoke about musical stylings for solo piano and accompanying.

Jim and Angie Clemens live near Dayton, Va. Angie, a music teacher, prepared a child-friendly workshop called "Make a Joyful Noise."

Ted Swartz, who explores the intersection of humor and faith, emceed the weekend's events. He was joined for a presentation by his siblings, Tim Swartz, a painter, and Tina Burkholder, a writer. They shared about their personal lives and how they came to embrace their callings as artists.

Pleasant Ridge Presbyterian Church invited MAW to plan a Sunday morning worship session in their sanctuary, a custom since 2008.

The next Mennonite Arts Weekend will be held in February 2016.—*Kate Yoder, intern for* The Mennonite

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Ethics of digital piracy from a Christian perspective

Caley Ortman asks whether or not we should download music illegally.

We live in a technology-driven world. With new innovation transforming our lives at a lightning pace, our means of processing the implications of such drastic changes drags along behind, almost an afterthought as we try to keep up with our eagerness for "better," "easier" and "faster." While we marvel at the benefits technology brings to our society, there is reason for uneasiness regarding the ethical implications of an "act first, think later" mentality that comes with the technology era of the 21st century. One such ethical dilemma is digital piracy, where "to download or not to download" is definitely the question.

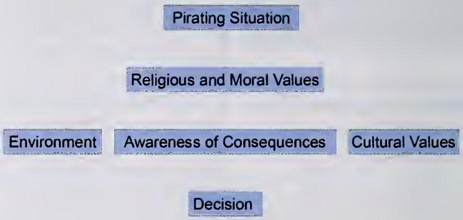
Digital piracy exploded on the scene in 1999 with the invention of Napster, a peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing internet service that, through hosting a central directory, enabled users to search the hard drives of other Napster users in order to locate and download music files. The software was an overnight sensation with college students, and by early 2001, Napster had over 38 million users with an estimated 2.5 billion songs downloaded ("Beyond Copyright: A Moral Investigation of Intellectual Property Protection in Cyberspace" by Richard A. Spinello in *The Impact of the Internet on Our Moral Lives*, 2005). The Recording Industry Association of America, which represents the interests of the major record labels in the United States, sued Napster for copyright infringement and eventually won. P2P downloading has grown exponentially since the late 1990s, spawning many copycat sites. In the decade since Napster emerged, the RIAA website reports that music sales have dropped 47 percent, causing an annual loss of $12.5 billion to the U.S. economy, and in 2009, "only 37 percent of music acquired by U.S. consumers was paid for."

Music downloading has developed despite federal law, which states that "making unauthorized copies of copyrighted music recordings is against the law and may subject you to civil and criminal liability" (RIAA). Despite the clarity of this law, a majority of young people continue to violate it. One 2007 study published in the April *Journal of Business Ethics* by Timothy Paul Cronan states that 76.5 percent of the college students sampled had pirated music. So why does a large percentage of young people, most of whom function in society with law-abiding behaviors, break this specific law by illegally downloading copyrighted music?

I have identified four factors that I feel best exemplify the downloader's dilemma when considering the pirating of copyrighted music: religious and moral values, environment, awareness of consequences, and cultural values.

With many studies putting religious and moral values on the same plane as the other factors, I decided that to better articulate a Christian model of processing digital piracy, the centrality of religious conviction needed to be addressed, no simply as one of many factors to consider, but as the primar factor through which all secondary factors are filtered.

Accordingly, in my diagram, the first tier of factors are "religious and moral convictions," which should be of primary importance to Christians. My second tier of factors ar universal for everyone: environment, awareness of consequences, and cultural values. Processing the issue in this fashion should lead us to an informed Christian decision.



I'll begin with the second tier of factors—those universal to everyone:

1. Environment: The biggest environmental contributor is ease of use. A quick Google search of "file-sharing sites" brings up results from websites listing top P2P sites. These are not underground websites that require subscriptions or passwords. These websites allow, almost without exception, free unlimited access with only one small software download.

Other environmental factors are higher bandwidth and decreasing data storage cost. Around the time digital piracy began in the late 1990s, a song needed 25 minutes to download. Today the same song can be downloaded in under a minute. Naturally, faster speeds lead to much higher quantities of downloading. With regards to data storage, computer that used to have the capacity to hold 2,000 songs now have the capacity to hold 250,000. This amount of space allows fo music hoarding. As a result, on most P2P sites, a lot of music is downloaded an album at a time, or even an artist's complete discography (sometimes 10 to 20 albums) with jus the click of a button.

2. Awareness of consequences: The RIAA is quick to point out that federal law threatens criminal penalties for first-time offenders that copy or distribute copyrighted music "as high as five years in prison and $250,000 in fines"—even if the downloader did not do so for financial or personal gain. These consequences doubtless scare some potential downloaders from pirating, but most continue despite the possible consequences. Why? Because these laws are difficult to enforce.

Unlike music downloading, 76 percent of young people do not shoplift physical copies of music. This is because punishment for shoplifters is relatively swift and consistent. Threats without action eventually become more and more ineffective as consumers realize that those in authority are either unwilling or unable to carry out promised consequences. With the exception of occasional news releases of a small-time downloader being sued for massive sums of money, record companies do not have the resources to consistently enforce the law against the general public.

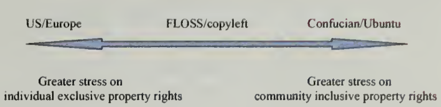
3. Cultural values: In our society, shoplifting a CD from a music store would almost unanimously be viewed as unethical. Most people would also agree that downloading an illegal copy of a music album is like stealing a physical CD from a music store. It would follow then, that downloading an illegal copy of a music album is also wrong. Yet most people do not equate the two acts as equally unethical. This reflects the current trend of cultural values.

While it is possible that we are regressing into less-moral creatures, it is more likely that the rapid advancement of technology has introduced new elements into our social norms and cultural values—an unspoken norm that assumes that "if we can find a way to obtain a digital copy, it is ours for the keeping."

The ease of use, lack of consequences, and a shift in cultural values open up an interesting question: Are the ethics of the physical world effective or relevant in the context of cyberspace? With such ambiguity on the ethics of digital piracy, the question becomes, How do Christians process societal factors to determine whether downloading copyrighted material is acceptable and ethical behavior? Let us address these factors again, this time through the lens of religious and moral conviction:

First, instead of focusing on consequences, a Christian ethic asks us to take a closer look at the law regarding piracy. The question should not be, Is the potential consequence worth breaking the law? but rather, Is this a law we should be breaking? Romans 13:5 calls us to submit to the authorities "not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience." However, while Scripture places a high importance on respecting governmental authority, there have been many instances throughout history where Christians have broken the law because it was unjust and unethical. The question, then, is, Are the copyright laws just or unjust?

Charles Ess, in his book *Digital Media Ethics* (2009), argues that United States copyright law is merely a reflection of our cultural values and should not be assumed as a universal moral norm. In his chapter on copyright, Ess provides the following diagram:


US/Europe
FLOSS/copyleft
Confucian/Ubuntu
Greater stress on individual exclusive property rights
Greater stress on community inclusive property rights

The United States, Ess notes, justifies copyright by its long-term contribution to the larger public. By protecting people's right to benefit from their invention, they are encouraged to continue investing in quality inventions.

In the late 1990s, a more community-focused alternative came to the table with the FLOSS/copyleft movement (Free/Libre/ Open Source Software). While these models were driven by the goal of making free software more attractive to for-profit businesses, it was also a conscious rebellion against commercial development of profit-oriented software and the copyrights that protected such software, writes Ess. From this movement we received the free web browser Firefox, the office suite Open Office, and Wikipedia.

On the far right of the spectrum, we find Confucian ethics and African thought. Confucian ethics as Ess summarizes it, explains that "a master philosopher or thinker is motivated primarily by the desire to benefit others with his or her work—rather than say, personally profit through the sale of that work—and so he or she would want to see that work copied and distributed widely rather than restricted in its distribution." Therefore, instead of rights being exclusive, they are inclusive and available to everybody. Are our ethical norms ethically relative to the culture in which we are raised, or is there another point on the property rights spectrum that we should be aiming for?

For our answer as Christians, we need to turn to the dominant Christian authority: Scripture—especially the example and words of Jesus. Systems modeled by Jesus, his disciples and the early church were more community-centered than the capitalist system of the United States, which tends toward a more individual-focused framework. In the Old Testament, righteousness meant preserving the peace and wholeness of the community. In the New Testament, Matthew 6:19-34 addresses storing up treasures in heaven instead of storing up treasures on earth. Glen Stassen, in his book *Kingdom Ethics* (2003), observes that since all the benefits for our material needs come from God to us, this passage suggests by implication that we can become a part of God's redemptive force in history by sharing these benefits with those who are in need.

Some argue that a capitalist system is not a constructive model for community; it leads to common pitfalls that are contrary to biblical principals. A capitalist system results in income and wealth inequality, concentrations of political power contributing to the exploitation of the poor by the rich, consumerism and ruthlessness in economic relations. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote in his essay "Why We Can't Wait" that "any law that uplifts human personality is just.

Any law that degrades human personality is unjust." Do such shortcomings of the capitalist system make digital piracy unjust?

Jesus equated storing up treasure on earth with greed. He connected greed with a lifestyle of luxury, pride, hoarding, self-indulgence, oppression and lack of generosity, says Stassen. Jesus fought the injustice of greed and for deliverance of the poor from extortion by the powerful (Luke 3:1-14; Matthew 3:1-10).

Are we also called to fight injustice in a similar fashion, striving for a more community friendly and economically stable music industry by boycotting major record labels and disregarding copyright laws in our downloading practices? If copyright laws could be deemed unjust, then illegal downloading could be seen as an effective tool that brought CD prices down from $18 to $10-$12, thus fighting income and wealth inequality.

Before jumping to this conclusion, it is important to take counter arguments into consideration. While addressing the weaknesses of capitalism, Stassen is also quick to point out that "liberal capitalism at its best maximizes personal autonomy, encourages innovation, meets the basic human needs of most people in society, generates numerous jobs and produces great wealth." We can't simply wash our hands of the moral dilemma of digital piracy by pitting ourselves against an "evil system" of capitalist greed.

If we justify illegal downloading, it is a slippery slope. If what makes copyright laws unjust is the greed and wealth/power inequality, how do we measure that? How much money does an artist or label have to make before they are one of the "bad guys"? $50 million? $10 million? $500,000? Do we look into how they spend their money or whether they give a portion to charity? At what point does an artist become a local or independent artist, one worth supporting and not illegally downloading? All these criteria are too subjective to merit this being called an "unjust law."

While it is clear that corporate record labels contribute to the greed and wealth inequality against which we must fight, it is unclear as to whether the copyright laws that protect record labels and artists can be considered unjust. However, as Christians, we must first turn inward and assess our own motives and what God is calling us to do. We can do this, says Stassen, through embracing character ethics, which allows us not only to focus on right or wrong decisions but on what shapes the character of those who make the decisions and do the actions.

1. We need to emphasize that specific practices form character.

We must assess our motives when faced with the idea of downloading music. Am I downloading this song illegally because I am fighting an oppressive system of greed and wealth inequality, or am I downloading this song because I want more music than I am able or willing to pay for? Accusing corporations of greed, hoarding and self-interest is only throwing stones in glass houses if we cannot honestly confront our ulterior motives.

Second, we must be attentive to the Holy Spirit, which I believe is nurtured and takes form in what we call our conscience. One of the ways to do this is to pay attention to feelings of guilt. If guilt is problematic, we must explore alternatives. Perhaps we boycott major record labels and listen to this music on Pandora, Spotify or Grooveshark, free streaming radio sites and software that allow the listener to listen to the music without having to own it by downloading it illegally. Maybe this guilt is eased by consciously buying local and independent music with the money you would have spent on major record label productions. Or maybe the guilt is eased by giving up owning certain music altogether.

2. We need to emphasize the virtues.

Pursuing justice must not come through attacking the music industry by any means possible to bring its demise. We need to stay in check with other important virtues, such as humility, honesty, fairness and integrity. Are we humble enough to address our own greed in wanting free music? Are we honest enough not to hide behind the justification that cultural values makes downloading the norm? Do we value integrity enough to keep from downloading on the grounds of ease of use? And are we fair enough to acknowledge that music is a luxury and not a necessity, thus discouraging us from throwing Scripture at the issue of Jesus' justice, which in context is meant for the powerless and the outcasts?

3. We must stress that character is formed by the shaping, encouraging and correcting influence of the community.

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). It is easy, especially in cyberspace, to find a like-minded community for illegal downloading. Justifying behaviors solely based on the encouragement of those who hold the view we want to hold is inadequate. We must engage these tough issues with a discerning and Christ-centered community, never flinching from the response we receive, regardless of whether or not it is in agreement with our desires.

4. Community and character depend on knowing we are participants in a larger history, a larger drama.

We are in a unique position. We are the first generation to wrestle with many of these ethical issues regarding the new era of technology. Our individual character will shape the character of our Christian community, and regardless of whether or not our voice is heard, our Christian community will have an impact on how digital piracy is perceived, both now and for years to come. The ethics surrounding digital piracy and the broader technological issues are an ever growing ripple in the pond of our existence and is something we must engage consciously, with open hearts, with discerning minds and with communities of compassionate character.—*Caley Ortman, who attends Faith Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.*

CALENDAR

"Tending the Fire" is the theme of upcoming regional retreats for the **Mennonite Spiritual Directors Network**. The Great Lakes retreat will take place May 5-7 at Lindenwood Retreat Center near Plymouth, Ind.; the East Coast retreat will be June 4-6 at Richmond Hill Retreat Center in Richmond, Va. To register, go to www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-center/.

WORKERS

Miller, Daniel L., was installed as lead pastor of New Life Mennonite Church, Ellicott City, Md., on Jan. 1, 2014.

Nolt, Robert E., was installed as lead pastor of East Petersburg Mennonite Church, East Petersburg, Pa., on Jan. 1, 2014.

Rutter, Rick, was ordained as a missionary/church worker in Southern New Hampshire at Crossroads Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on Dec. 29, 2013.

Speigle, Wayne, was installed as interim pastor of New Holland Mennonite Church, New Holland, Pa., on Jan. 1, 2014.

Tamang, Menuka, was licensed as lead pastor of RiversEdge Nepali Fellowship, Lancaster, Pa., on Jan. 4, 2014.

OBITUARIES

Beck, Barbara "Bobbie" Nine, 67, Coldwater Lake, Mich., died Dec. 31, 2013. Spouse: Donald R. Beck. Parents: Earl and Wilda Fansler Nine. Children: Dustin, Brooke Scheidler; two grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 11 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

Beck, Mary Schmucker, 85, Archbold, Ohio, died Feb. 12. Spouse: Vincent Beck (deceased). Parents: Myron and Herma Short Schmucker. Children: Kirk, Bill; six grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 16 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Blauch, Merda Mae "Toots" Bridge, 87, Harrisonburg, Va., died Jan. 31, 2014. Spouse: James William Blauch (deceased). Parents: Paul R. and Anna Washnock Bridge. Children: Lois Blauch Miller, Jim Blauch Jr.; four grandchildren. Memorial service: Feb. 8 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church.

Brenneman, Mary Katherine Conrad, 83, Kalona, Iowa, died Dec. 30, 2013. Spouse: Lynn Brenneman. Parents: Orie M. and Eda Zehr Conrad. Children: James, Michael, Pamela Stoltzfus, Steven, Sara Meganathan; 11 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 4 at Kalona Mennonite Church, Kalona.

Bromwell, Harold Gardner, 83, Stuarts Draft, Va., died Dec. 28, 2013. Spouse: Joyce Louise Bromwell. Parents: Julian T. and Hazel Gardner Bromwell. Children: Rachel Miller, Paula Martin; two grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Dec. 30 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va.

Burkholder, Merlin Abraham, 89, Waynesboro, Va., died Oct. 2, 2013. Spouse: Gertrude Martin Burkholder (deceased). Parents: Perry A. and Mattie K. Burkholder. Children: Eddie, Robert, Perry, Philip, Cindy Houff, Sara Showalter, Jay, Robin Burkholder, Wendell; 22 grandchildren; 35 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 7 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro.

Cordell, Beulah Martin, 85, Chambersburg, Pa., died Dec. 24, 2013, of a ruptured aortic abdominal aneurysm. Spouse: Bishop Merle G. Cordell. Parents: Charles and Lula Holsinger Martin. Children: Doris, Ruby, David, Richard; five grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 29 at Marion Mennonite Church, Marion, Pa.

Derstine, Ruth Freed, 95, Perkasie, Pa., died Jan. 18. Spouse: Noah T. Derstine (deceased). Children: Jeanette Baum, Bette Aukerman, Carolyn Godshall; five grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 25 at Rockhill Mennonite Community Home, Sellersville, Pa.

Detweiler, Miriam Alderfer, 79, Hickory, N.C., died Feb. 5. Spouse: Durrell Derstine Detweiler. Parents: Henry Wisler Alderfer and Aquilla Leatherman Alderfer. Children: Gwen Zook, Yvonne Martin, Melody Phelps, Glenn, Dennis, Merlin; 16 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 9 at Providence Baptist Church.

Dyck, Cornelius John "CJ," 92, Normal, Ill., died Jan. 10, surrounded by Wilma Regier Dyck, his loving wife and family. His body has been donated to the Illinois Anatomical Gift Association deom where his ashes will be returned to the family for burial at the Mennonite (Ropp) Cemetery. Surviving him are his wife of 61 years, Wilma of Normal; three daughters, Mary of Normal, Jennifer (Suzie Lane)) of Dunkirk, N.Y., and Suzanne (Brad Kliewer) of Minneapolis, Minn., three granddaughters, Claire Dyck of Normal, Aurora and Avery Kliewer of Minneapolis; and sisters Clara Dyck and Renate (George Kroeker) of Winnipeg, Manitoba, as well as many nieces

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

and nephews. Memorial service: Jan. 18 at the Mennonite Church of Normal.

Frey, Willard James, 89, Archbold, Ohio, died Jan. 21. Spouse: Valetta Becky Frey. Spouse: Delores Ann Short Frey (deceased). Parents: Edward B. and Fannie Rupp Frey. Children: Sue Ann Overholt, Mary Jo Wilson, Peggy Arndt, Lee; 10 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 24 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Godshall, Rachel D. Detweiler, 91, Souderton, Pa., died Jan. 2. Spouse: Leroy G. Godshall (deceased). Parents: Charles and Rachel Derstine Detweiler. Children: Beverly Ann Leatherman, Stanton D., Sharon S. Swartley, Charles D., Joan Derstine; 20 grandchildren; 25 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 7 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Graber, Viola Mae Litwiller, 91, Delavan, Ill., died Jan. 24. Spouse: Peter Henry Graber (deceased). Parents: Ervin Thomas and Kathryn Vietta King Litwiller. Children: Richard, Mark, Susan Litwiller, Sandra Sears, David, Janice; 17 grandchildren; 24 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: Jan. 29 at Hopedale Mennonite Church, Hopedale, Ill.

Groff, Willis M., 86, Denver, died Dec. 7, 2013. Spouse: Alma Groff. Children: Carolyn Groff, Dale. Funeral: Jan. 4 at the Chapel of Someren Glen-West, Centennial, Colo.

Gunden, Elsie A. Zimmerman, 91, Myerstown, Pa., died Dec. 29, 2013. Spouse: Donald E. Gunden. Parents: Elmer and Erma J. Troyer Zimmerman. Children: Marilyn J. Gunden, Bonita L. Gunden, Donald K., Douglas E.; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 4 at Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

Hess, David M., 95, Lititz, Pa., died Dec. 27, 2013. Spouse: Ruth B. Brenneman Hess (deceased). Parents: David and Lydia Buckwalter Hess. Children: David, James, Daniel, Cheryl Erb, John, Phyllis Gorno; 14 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 2 at Akron Mennonite Church, Akron, Pa.

Hildebrand, David, 96, Altona, Manitoba, died Dec. 21, 2013. Spouse: Kathleen Hoeppner Braun Hildebrand. Parents: Henry H. and Aganetha Schellenberg Hildebrand. Children: Merle, Gerald, Lorne, Rhona Sawatzky, Mona Lacey; 13 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 27 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

Jenkins, Dale Martin, 59, Littleton, Colo., died Jan. 29, of pancreatic cancer. Spouse: Marie Dawn Goering Jenkins. Parents: Kenneth Raymond and Wanda Ruth Holly Jenkins. Children: Bree-Ann Dulaney, Shay Jenkins; step-children: Brian Toews, Rachel Toews; two grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 1 at Horan and McConaty Funeral Home, Centennial, Colo.

Kauffman, Maynard J., 71, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 4, of ALS. Spouse: Joyce K. Eichelberger Kauffman. Parents: Milo and Katie Yoder Kauffman. Children: Tina R. Duncan, Tonya D. Rutter, Scott D., Rick E., Adam B., Anthony J.; 11 grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 10 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Kaufman, Richard "Dick" R., 71, Hesston, Kan., died Jan 26. Spouse: Barbara A. Claassen Kaufman. Parents: Dick and Lizzie Yutzy Kaufman. Children: Christine Schweitzer, Mara Kaufman; one grandchild. Funeral: Jan. 30 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

King, Donald Glenn, 77, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 17, 2013. Spouse: Barbara Saltzman King (deceased). Parents: Elbert and Goldie Grove King. Children: Cheryl Marie Thomas, Daryl; two grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 21 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Kinsey, Ray Jacob, 78, Archbold, Ohio, died Dec. 27, 2013. Spouse: Grace Waidelich Kinsey. Parents: Walter and Alma Hauck Kinsey. Children: Randy, Karen Kelley, Janet Myers, Wesley, Julie Boykins; 12 grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 31 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Kreider, Betty Jane Book, 79, Lancaster, Pa., died Jan. 22 of end-stage renal failure and lupus. Spouse: John Eby Kreider. Parents: Harold Kreider Book and Cora Reist Hershey Book. Children: Connie Bender, Barry, John, Philip, Jennifer Peifer, Kirby; 14 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 26 at Mellinger Mennonite Church, Lancaster.

Lederach, Paul Mensch, 88, Lansdale, Pa., died Jan. 6. Spouse: Mary K. Slagell Lederach. Parents: Willis Kulp Lederach and Mary Mensch Lederach. Children: Judith L. Styer, James S., Deborah L. Gunden, Rebecca S. Lederach; eight grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 11 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Leichty, Wilma Evelyn Ewert, 88, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 15, 2013. Spouse: Clarence Nicholas Leichty (deceased). Parents: Henry Sperling Ewert and Carrie Nickel Ewert. Children: Paul, Bruce, Cheryl Blaum; five grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 30 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Lepley, Irene Beyeler, 71, Orrville, Ohio died Jan. 23. Spouse: Robert L. Lepley. Parents: Floyd and Martha Rohrer Beyeler. Child: Shawn; three grandchildren. Funeral Jan. 26 at Crown Hill Mennonite Church, Rittman, Ohio.

Martin, Romaine E. Brumbaugh Weaver, 104, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 24, 2013. Spouse: Raymond Martin (deceased). Spouse: Harley C. Weaver (deceased). Parents: Charles E. and Fannie Cripe Brumbaugh. Child: Frances Landis; step-children: Betty Fervida, Dennis Martin three grandchildren; six step-grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; 18 step-great-grandchildren; seven step-great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 27 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Maust, Robert Franklin, 84, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 8, 2013. Spouse: Carol L. Nisley Maust (deceased). Parents: Edward and Emma Kauffman Maust. Children: Anita Snyder, Rodney, Jerry, Brian, Tina Marie Maust; 13 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 14 at Clinton

Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Miller, Elroy Glen, 78, Millersburg, Ind., died Jan. 15, of complications from a fall. Spouse: Marie Gingerich Miller. Parents: Elmer E. Miller and Ida Nisley Miller Yoder. Children: Cheryl Gall, Lavonne Warstler, Keith, Diane Lockwood, Carla Dawn Miller, Dana Lee; 10 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 19 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Miller, Joseph Jr., 75, South Bend, Ind., died Jan. 25, of mesothelioma. Spouse: Phyllis Hahn Miller. Parents: Joseph and Amanda Schmucker Miller. Children: Lorie J. Miller, Sheila Miller Bigelow; four grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 2 at Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend.

Miller, Leabell S. Troyer, 82, Shipshewana, Ind., died Jan. 15, of complication of scleroderma. Spouse: Wayne Miller. Parents: Menno and Florence Kauffman Troyer. Children: Kathy Troyer, Becky Manning, Kevin, Jonathon, Jeff, Eric; 12 grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Jan. 19 at Shore Mennonite Church, Shipshewana.

Moyer, Glenn Ray, 61, Telford, Pa., died Nov. 26, 2013. Spouse: Nancy Rose Derstine Moyer. Children: Raymond M. and Ruth G. Hendricks Moyer. Children: Martha Detweiler, Rebecca Moyer DeFelice; two grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 2 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford.

Nester, Norman H., 86, Emmaus, Pa., died Jan. 8. Spouse: Stella D. Smith Nester. Parents: Elmer and Mabel Fegley Nester. Children: Sharon Bleiler, Renee Hoch, Denise Jacoby, Monica Nester Thayer, Kenneth; five grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Jan. 11 at Upper Milford Mennonite Church, Old Zionsville, Pa.

Plank, John G., 83, Goshen, Ind., died Nov. 6, 2013. Spouse: Roberta N. Miller Plank. Parents: George D. and Fannie Hershberger Plank. Children: Janet Goppert, Gary, Kevin; four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 11 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Smith, Walter J., 95, Hilltown Township, Pa., died Dec. 17, 2013. Spouse: Pearl Clemmer Smith (deceased). Parents: Harvey and Anna Strouse Smith. Child: Carolyn Landis; two grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 3 at Chapel of the Rockhill Mennonite Community, Sellersville, Pa.

Smoker, Mabel D. Zook, 79, Honey Brook, Pa., died Jan. 21. Spouse: Calvin L. Smoker. Parents: Aaron J. and Elsie Mast Zook. Children: Richard, Beverly, Ronald, Larry, Mona Lu Shuman; 10 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 25 at Tel Hai Chapel, Honey Brook.

Stuckey, Sadie V. Heishman, 92, Archbold, Ohio, died Dec. 7, 2013. Spouse: Orville D. Stuckey (deceased). Parents: Russell and May Brill Heishman. Children: Jane Stuckey, Terry Stuckey, Randy Stuckey; two grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 11 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

Stucky, Frances Bernice Preheim, 87, Freeman, S.D., died Jan. 20. Spouse: Herman Stucky. Parents: Emil and Frances P. Waltner Preheim. Children: Janver Stucky, Jackie Stucky-Strom; two grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 24 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Unger, Dorothy J. Keller, 85, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 15. Spouse: George S. Unger (deceased). Parents: Emil and Anna Roth Keller. Children: Ben. Funeral: Jan. 19 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Waltner, Gusta Tieszen, 93, Marion, S.D., died Feb. 3. Spouse: Will H. Waltner (deceased). Parents: John and Mary Dick Tieszen. Children: Jerald, Ted, Murray; two grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 7 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Wismer, George R., 72, Perkasie, Pa., died Jan. 5. Spouse: Lois Ann Moore Wismer. Parents: Elmer and Adeline Rush Wismer. Children: Michael G., Connie Y. Wismer, Jeffrey A., two grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 11 at Deep Run East Mennonite Church, Perkasie.

Yoder, Janice E. Stahly, 74, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 22. Spouse: Carlton E. Yoder (deceased). Parents: Ralph and Sevilla Miller Stahly. Children: Bryan E., Nathan R., Lynette R. Singleton, Todd J.; seven grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 25 at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

Yoder, Robert K., 89, Kalona, Iowa, died Dec. 27, 2013. Spouse: Elvira Stoltzfus Yoder (deceased). Parents: Ray and Kathryn Miller Yoder. Children: Marcia Yoder-Schrock, Mahlon, Stanley, Herschel, Atlee; 11 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 31 at Kalona Mennonite Church.

Zacharias, David, 91, Winnipeg (formerly Altona and Rosenfeld), Manitoba, died Jan. 24. Spouse: Freda Ginter Zacharias (deceased). Spouse: Martha Penner Zacharias (deceased). Parents: John A. and Maria Dueck Zacharias. Child: Darlene Zacharias. Funeral: Jan. 29 at Bergthaler Mennonite Chruch, Altona, Manitoba.

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RESOURCES

A Political Theology of Climate Change by Michael S. Northcott (Eerdmans, 2013, $30) argues that nations have legal and moral responsibilities to rule over limited terrains and to guard a just and fair distribution of the fruits of the earth within the ecological limits of those terrains.

Pentecostal and Holiness Statements on War and Peace, edited by Jay Beaman and Brian K. Pipkin (Pickwick Publications, 2013, $34), demonstrates that numerous Holiness groups and virtually all early Pentecostal groups had some form of pacifist statement against war. While their early doctrines opposed killing, many named in the book are now staunch supporters of Christian participation in war.

Bonnet Strings: An Amish Woman's Ties to Two Worlds by Saloma Miller Furlong (Herald Press, 2014, $15.99) recounts how the author was coerced to return to her strict Amish community but was able to make the break for good thanks to the love of the "Yankee" (non-Amish) man she would eventually marry.

Just Peace: Ecumenical, Intercultural and Interdisciplinary Perspectives, edited by Frernando Enns and Annette Mosher (Pickwick Publications, 2013, $34), includes essays by peacebuilding practitioners and experts from different parts of the world (Africa, Latin America, North America, Asia and Europe) and from different disciplines (anthropology, psychology, social sciences, law and theology) to promote discussion about the different dimensions of building peace with justice.

Reality, Grief, Hope: Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks by Walter Brueggemann (Eerdmans, 2014, $15) points out correlations between the catastrophe of 9/11 and the destruction of ancient Jerusalem and shows how the prophetic biblical response to that crisis was truth-telling in the face of ideology, grief in the face of denial and hope in the face of despair. Brueggemann argues that the same prophetic responses are urgently required from us.

From Teilhard to Omega: Co-creating an Unfinished Universe, edited by Ilia Delio (Orbis Books, 2014, $30), collects essays by 13 scholars who build on the work of the French Jesuit and scientist, who died in 1955. With ongoing discoveries in physics and cosmology, these scholars explore new windows to the divine mystery, the evolving person and new energies of love.

Scripture and Tradition: What the Bible Really Says by Edith Humphrey (BakerAcademic, 2013, $19.99) bridges the gap between the apostolic and postapostolic church by exploring the biblical foundations for Christian tradition.

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Food Services Director Position: College Mennonite Church seeks a full-time person to continue the food services ministry at CMC. Prior experience in food service is required. This position requires regular attendance at College Mennonite Church in order to perform essential job duties. Contact Willie Kanagy at 574-535-7262 or willie@collegemennonite.org or Geof Landis at 574- 831-3613 or geof@mennotrav.com. EOE

Connexus Language Institute in South Korea seeks **university graduates to teach elementary school students English** while living in Christian community. One- to two-year commitment. Round-trip airfare provided. Email master@connexus.co.kr.

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Landisville Mennonite Church, Landisville, Pa., is seeking a **full-time associate pastor of youth and young adults**. For more information, please contact the search committee at search@landisvillemennonite.org.

Eastern Mennonite University seeks qualified applicants for a **full-time Director of Master of Arts in Education and Tenure-Track Faculty position**. The position is responsible for the vision, vitality and every day functions of a successful and innovative NCATE-accredited multi-site program in graduate teacher education. This half-time administrative and half-time teaching position includes directing the Master of Arts main-campus-based program and collaborating with the Master of Arts in Education program director at Lancaster, Pa. The director is responsible for developing and promoting new programs, recruiting, advising incoming MA candidates, planning and evaluating curriculum, and formulating and managing budget within the program. The ability to work collegially as part of an integrated graduate and undergraduate program and compatibility with the department's mission "to prepare competent, caring, reflective practitioners who value service to others, and teach boldly in a changing world through an ethic of care and critical reflection" is essential. Doctoral degree in education required. Position begins Fall 2014. Submit application, curriculum vitae, transcripts (unofficial) and three letters of reference to: graduate@emu.edu. For more information visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanresources. Persons who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

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Immanuel Mennonite Church, a small multicultural congregation in Harrisonburg, Va., with the motto "real people following Jesus' radical call to love and service" seeks **half-time pastor.** MLI required. Inquiries to Rebekah Charles, rebekahgood-charles@gmail.com Salary in accordance with MC USA guidelines.

Eastern Mennonite School is in the search process for the following positions:

- Biological sciences—**high school instructor**
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Camp Deerpark is seeking a **construction supervisor** for our Children's Camp Village, which when completed will consist of eight cabins, a program center and pump house. The qualified candidate must be comfortable with nonconventional construction practices. While this is a supervisory position, the role requires extensive hands-on craftsmanship. Tasks include: operating woodmizer sawmill, excavating equipment, plumbing, etc. A three-year commitment is required. Compensation includes salary, medical and housing. Contact Ken Bontrager at 845-754-8669 or admin@campdeerpark.org.

What will it mean for us to be renewed?

Jon Heinly is youth minister for Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference and Lancaster Mennonite Schools. He can be reached at jheinly@lancasterconference.org.

Renewal is a potent word. If we played a word association game with "renewal," the first words that came to your mind would probably be different from what came to my mind, which would be different from the responses of your neighbor, best friend, pastor, coworker or hairstylist.

I was in a meeting where we were discussing the need for renewal within Mennonite Church USA. As I reflected on the meeting, I realized everyone in the room had a unique working definition of the word renewal.

I thought of revival and conversion, of composting and recycling. I thought of people who have left military service because they became conscientious objectors to war. I thought of youth who have left destructive life patterns because they encountered the genuine love and acceptance of Jesus. And I thought of my own struggle to understand what it means for me to experience constantly the renewing of my mind.

> Maintaining a commitment to genuine discernment requires time and energy.

I appreciate the J.B. Phillips version of Romans 12:1-2, which says, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within." While this is a more passive interpretation than the standard "do not be conformed to the pattern of this world," it conveys more vividly the subtle power of our world to mold us into its own image, which is what will happen to us by default. It is only with intentionality, a yielded posture, relationship with like-minded people and spiritual disciplines that our minds will be remolded or renewed into the image of Christ. This stark contrast helps me see why it is so hard for me to be renewed continually in contrast to the world around me.

Gospel stories revolve around Jesus challenging not only the cultural but the religious status quo. His words and his actions reveal something radically different from the options offered by the pervading culture. His message calls into question every area of life. So what does it look like for Mennonite Church USA to experience renewal?

Raising a generation of children and youth that value relationships and a balanced life above an unbridled pursuit of being the best athlete or scholar or musician will require not only a countercultural commitment of the youth themselves but their parents and their faith communities.

A church that interprets the use of technology through the eyes of Christ will run counter to a culture that is happily being molded into whatever image the newest technology has to offer.

An ongoing commitment to the unusual life of simplicity becomes increasingly more difficult in a world that offers more convenience every day if only we are willing to accept the world's mold of consumerism, efficiency and accessibility.

We live in a world where conflicts, especially those dealing with deeply held convictions, involve speaking as loudly as possible so that the other perspectives are drowned out. Listening to others, especially if we are to listen deeply enough to hear the pain associated with those beliefs, is countercultural.

Radical love and respect for all people stands out in a culture where women become CEOs but can still be objectified, and a race barrier can be broken by top executives while gross racial inequities continue in every community in the United States.

Welcoming the stranger is a radical stance in a context where policies receive more attention than the people affected by them.

Maintaining a commitment to genuine discernment within a community requires time and energy, which runs counter to a results-based and fast-paced world.

Constant renewal in our commitment to Christ's teaching of peace requires creativity in a culture and world that are constantly presenting new conflicts in which to mold us.

What does renewal look like if we accept a holistic and biblical understanding of the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus Christ? How do we avoid the many competing and incomplete narratives of the Holy Spirit's work in the life of the church and accept one that is complex and challenges each of us as well as our community of faith?

In his book *The Irresistible Revolution*, Shane Claiborne says, "Conversion," or we might substitute renewal, "is not an event but a process, a process of slowly tearing ourselves from the clutches of the culture." What will it mean for us to be renewed?

FILM REVIEW

The Monuments Men (PG-13) tells the fascinating true story of a group that goes into Germany toward the end of World War II to rescue artistic masterpieces from Nazi thieves and return them to their rightful owners.—*Gordon Houser*

BOOK REVIEWS

The Nonviolent God by J. Denny Weaver (Eerdmans, 2013, $25) argues that "if God is truly revealed in the nonviolent Christ, then God should not be described as a God who sanctions and employs violence." Weaver considers how Jesus is revealed in Scripture and engages the atonement tradition. In this important book, he calls for a theology for living the reign of God made visible in Jesus."—*gh*

Songs from an Empty Cage: Poetry, Mystery, Anabaptism and Peace by Jeff Gundy (Cascadia Publishing House, 2013, $23.95) is a sequel to Gundy's *Walker in the Fog: On Mennonite Writing.* Gundy, whose poetry has been published here, seeks to develop "an Anabaptist theopoetics" as he explores transgressions, traditions, poetry, pedagogy, peace, music, metaphor, martyrs and mystery. His observations and reflections are engaging and challenging, if not always accessible to the general reader.—*gh*

Reading the Passion Stories with Heart and Mind by Wes Bergen (Lighthouse Christian Publishing, 2013, $7.95) seeks to combine two ways of looking at the Passion stories in the Bible: it asks difficult intellectual questions of the texts and how these texts relate to our lives.—*gh*

Radical Jesus: A Graphic History of Faith, edited by Paul Buhle, with illustrations by Sabrina Jones, Gary Dumm and Nick Thorkelson (Herald Press, 2013, $24.99), uses comic art to present stories from Jesus' time through the Radical Reformation and peacemaking efforts today in Iraq and Colombia. This is an enjoyable and accessible way to learn history.—*gh*

When the watchdog didn't bark

One of the primary functions of journalism is to serve the public by holding accountable those in power who may be harming the public. But sometimes that watchdog function fails, as it did in the years leading up to the financial crisis of 2008.

That, at least, is the contention of Dean Starkman in "The Great Story" (*Columbia Journalism Review*, January/February). The article is an excerpt from his new book, *The Watchdog That Didn't Bark: The Financial Crisis and the Disappearance of Investigative Journalism* (Columbia University Press).

What happens when the watchdog doesn't bark, when journalism doesn't do its job of holding accountable those in power, Starkman writes, is that "the public is left in the dark about, and powerless against, complex problems that overtake important national institutions."

In this case, "10 million Americans uprooted by foreclosure with even more still threatened, 23 million unemployed or underemployed, whole communities set back a generation, shocking bailouts for the perpetrators, political polarization here and instability abroad."

The business press had produced many stories, but they failed to take on the institutions that brought down the financial system.

To help understand how and why this happened, Starkman looks at two kinds of reporting, what he calls "accountability reporting" and "access reporting." He draws up a list comparing them (see box below).

Access	Accountability
fast	slow
short	long
elite sources	dissident sources
top-down	bottom-up
quantity	quality
investor	public
niche	mass
functionalistic	moralistic

Access reporting gets inside information from powerful people and institutions and is geared toward investors.

Accountability reporting seeks to explain what those powerful people do and is geared toward the public. It explains complex problems to a mass audience and holds the powerful to account.

Such explaining takes time and is long, which doesn't go over well with who want their stories quick and short.

In January, a woman who formed an organization to fight human trafficking spoke at my church. She was inspired to begin her work after reading an investigative report in the *Wichita Eagle* about a 13-year-old girl who was enslaved by a pimp.

I pointed out to her that without that newspaper devoting funds to "accountability reporting," she would not have read that story.

Some call public-interest reporting "long" and "pretentious" stories by "elitist" reporters. "But opposing long and ambitious stories," writes Starkman, "is like fully supporting apple pie but opposing flour, butter, sugar and pie tins. In the end, there is no pie."

When we look at the financial crisis of 2008 and what led up to it, Starkman writes, "accountability reporting got the story that access reporting missed."

Such reporting goes beyond classifications of right or left, conservative or liberal. Instead it looks at a problem and explains how it came to be. Eventually, we learned about the institutions responsible for the financial collapse, but by then many lives had been ruined.

"Without accountability reporting," Starkman writes, "journalism has no purpose, no center, no point."

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

Troubled by conference direction

Re “Conference to License Pastor in Same-Sex Relationship” (February): I believe the direction developing within the Mountain States Mennonite Conference (MSMC) runs counter to the conviction of most of the emerging Mennonite churches around the world who treasure their historic relationship with the Mennonite Church USA. My observation is that they believe this decision is a departure from their commitment to biblical authority. It is also counter to the convictions of the majority of newly emerging Mennonite churches in North America.

I was born to Mennonite missionary parents in East Africa and have invested a lifetime in relating to emerging Mennonite churches in dozens of countries. Most of these churches were planted through Mennonite missionary outreach. There is much appreciation for the North American Mennonite denominations.

In recent years in my international travels, when I meet with Mennonite church leaders from the Global South, occasionally the question is raised as to whether Mennonite Church USA is standing firm in its stated commitment that sexual relationships shall be expressed only in marriage between a husband and wife (man and woman). I experience gratitude for this clear position by Mennonite Church USA and Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference, where I am a member. *The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* is applauded.

This leads me to believe that the direction being taken by MSMC will be received with grief and dismay by our brothers and sisters in partner international Mennonite churches as well as newly emerging churches in North America. I am perplexed and troubled that MSMC would choose directions that will trouble the relations of Mennonite Church USA with our international partner churches, especially in the Global South.

I love the Mennonite church and yearn that MSMC resist taking positions that are not only counter to the commitments espoused by the Mennonite Church USA but counter to the convictions of emerging Mennonite churches around the world as well as in North America.

Next year, we in the Lancaster area look forward to the privilege of welcoming guests from some 85 countries for Mennonite World Conference. Such gatherings are wonderful. But more importantly than hosting gatherings is the commitment to demonstrate that we are one body in Christ. The New Testament is clear that none of us has the authority to function independently but rather in ways that encourage the unity and building up of the body of Christ.

My hope and prayer is that MSMC will pause in the direction they are going and listen to the counsel of the emerging partner churches around the world as well as the emerging churches in North America.—*David W. Shenk, Mountville, Pa.*

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Cultivating indifference

I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled."—Luke 1:38

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."—Luke 22:42

My hope for the church spiked in late January at the annual School for Leadership Training at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va. My courage rose because we studied group discernment, the practice of listening for God's voice in the midst of difficult circumstances. As part of that study, we studied the need to cultivate "indifference" to all but the will of God.

I first learned about such indifference from the Quaker tradition of communal discernment. They use the term to describe the spiritual practice of laying down one's vested interests, desired outcomes or opinions for the sake of God's will. Those of us who serve on governing boards experience something similar when we admit a conflict of interest. For example, if I were serving on a search committee, and my son was being considered as a candidate for the office, I would need to step aside from the decision.

In a process of spiritual discernment, we may find that we're so committed to a particular outcome that it is difficult to imagine God revealing a different outcome to the group. That's why, in a process of discernment, Quakers may ask each person in the room to respond to the question: "Are you indifferent?" If the answer is no, the person may be asked to observe the process rather than participate in it.

When I consider some of the decisions in our church that need to be addressed through discernment, a voice cries out within: "How could I possibly be indifferent about something that is so important?" That's because I associate indifference with a disposition to apathy or laziness—a casual comment of "whatever" when facing a decision. But I have come to understand that indifference in a communal process of discernment is far from apathy. On the contrary, it grows out of a deep desire to know God's will, unfettered by petty desires or selfish ambition. It is a disposition that must be cultivated over time. The words of Mary and of Jesus in the verses cited above reflect such a disposition. Both Mary and Jesus had far too much at stake to be apathetic. Yet they were indifferent in the sense described here.

Lack of indifference can be a serious impediment to genuine discernment. If we have our minds firmly made up before we enter the group process, we can hardly be impartial to the outcome. In some matters, we may have such strong opinions that we speak of them as a matter of conscience. Rather than listening in the process of decision-making, we may feel compelled to insist, debate or perhaps shout our opinion. Therefore, when we gather in a communal process of discernment as people of conscience with sharply differing opinions, it may be exceedingly difficult to find group consensus. That's why, in a highly polarized political environment, we may lack the capacity for healthy discernment.

Lately, in order to cultivate indifference, I've been praying the prayer of relinquishment I learned from Richard Foster (*Prayers from the Heart*, Harper San Francisco, 1994). I commend it to you as well.

Today, O Lord, I yield myself to you.
May your will be my delight.
May your love be the pattern of my living.
I surrender to you my hopes, my dreams, my ambitions.
Do with them what you will, when you will, as you will.
I place into your loving care my family, my friends, my future.
Care for them with a care that I can never give.
I release into your hands my need to control, my craving for status, my fear of obscurity.
Eradicate the evil, purify the good and establish your kingdom on earth.
For Jesus' sake, Amen.

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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Do not define others' realities

Anna Groff

A 2012 survey finds that increasingly more and more white Americans want to stop talking about race.

According to the Portraits of American Life study, 45 percent of white participants in 2006 said one of the most effective ways to improve race relations was to stop talking about race. In 2012, this rose to 60 percent who wanted to stop talking about race. Black participants favoring less talk about race rose from 31 percent in 2006 to 39 percent in 2012.

However, Mennonite leaders at Hope for the Future did the exact opposite: They addressed the issue head on and worked to find ways to build leadership among Mennonite people of color. This was the first gathering of Hope for the Future in which members of the dominant culture were invited to join (see page 32).

White leaders from the dominant culture, including myself, were guests at this event. However, Luke Hartman, vice president of enrollment of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., presented a clear challenge for us to take home. He said that acting as a white "ally" is good, and working as an "advocate" is even better. But this isn't enough, he said. He called on us to work as "agents of change," as the term "agency" means, "having the power to act to create change."

"[Agents] engage in strategic action designed to bring about ongoing organizational improvement," he said. This requires acknowledging the privilege that members of the dominant culture have and then rechanneling that power to build up leaders of color.

During one of the Learning to Undo Racism events in Elkhart, Ind., in 2013, Stanley Green, executive director of Mennonite Mission Network, also asked dominant culture members to speak out against institutional and individual racism so that the minority culture isn't left to do this alone. Green outlined three types of racism he observes.

First, "benign racism," while harmful, is not malicious and demonstrates an individual's lack o awareness. Second, "blatant racism" is directly o fensive and demonstrates one's power over another. Third, "bruising racism" often comes from individuals who have friendships with people of color and/or have completed antiracism or diversity training. These individuals feel enlightened and therefore entitled to "define the reality" of the minority culture, Green said. They think they have good intentions, but the consequences are detrimental.

This third type of racism remains the most difficult to counter in our society and in Mennonite Church USA.

They think they have good intentions, but the consequences are detrimental.

It makes me think of my work at a domestic violence shelter in Arizona. The shelter was undergoing a review of its policies. The new director suggested eliminating all house "rules" or expectations for the victims living there. She said those rules, while couched in the pretense of providing safety for the women, actually demonstrated patriarchy or the notion that "we know what's best for others."

This challenged the advocates at the shelte as they hesitated to let go of their authority. They feared that victims wouldn't make the right decisions, and they wouldn't be able to protect them.

From a distance it is easy to see the arrogance of the advocates in this situation, but perhaps it i an easier trap to fall into than anyone would like to admit.

Let this remind us that while we in the dominant culture work to act as agents, we should intentionally look to leaders of color. Only they can define their own reality.

Leaders of color, thank you for inviting others into this conversation so that Mennonite Church USA can avoid a complacent silence.—*ag*

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Our crucified Savior and his questionable friends

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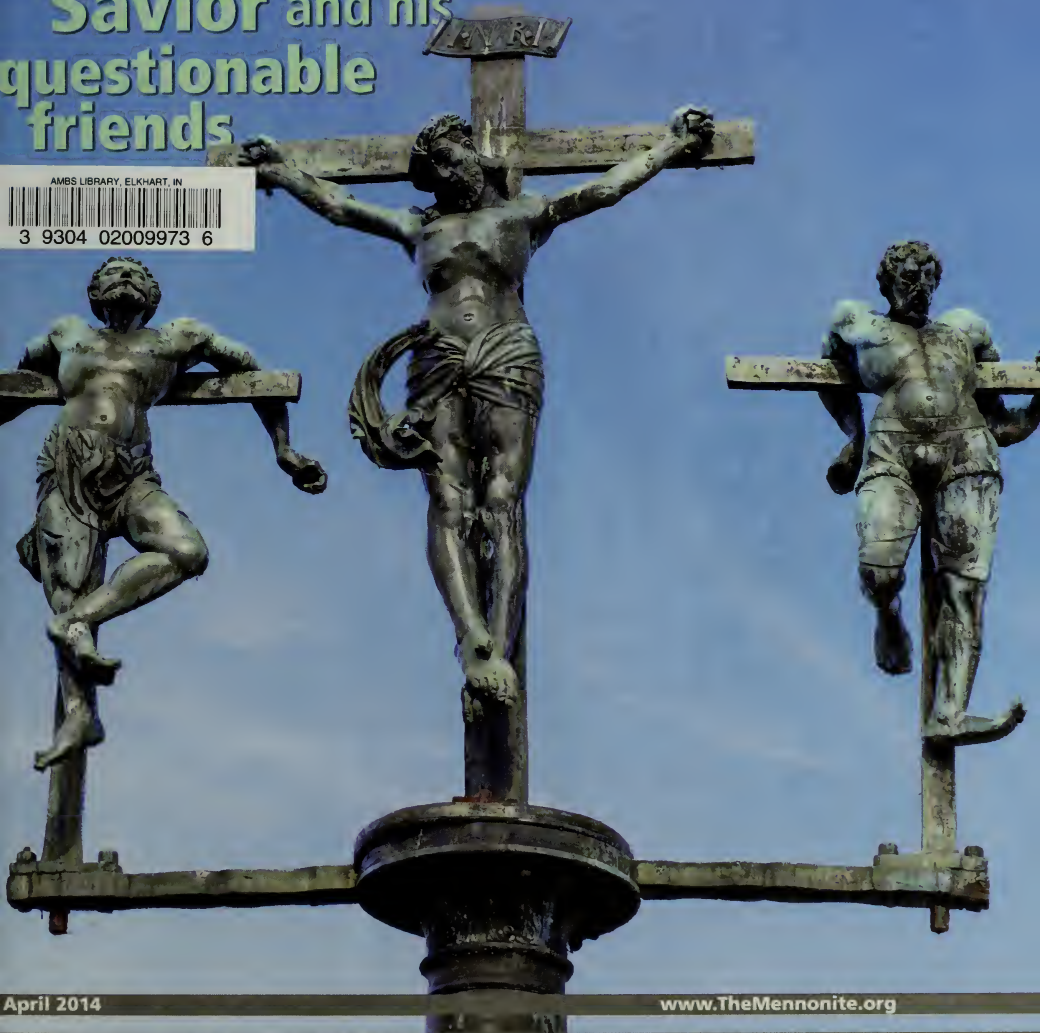

April 2014 www.TheMennonite.org

INSIDE:

- Easter beyond explanation
- The armor of light
- Doing church in the new millennium
- Climate change calls for a new politics
- With our bodies first

LUKE 24: *But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared.* [2]*They found the stone rolled away from the tomb,* [3]*but when they went in, they did not find the body.** [4]*While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them.* [5]*The women* were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men* said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.** [6]*Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee,* [7]*that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.'* [8]*Then they remembered his words,* [9]*and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.* [10]*Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles.* [11]*But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.* [12]*But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.** [13]*Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles* from Jerusalem,* [14]*and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.* [15]*While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them,* [16]*but their eyes were kept from recognizing him.* [17]*And he said to them, 'What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?' They stood still, looking sad.** [18]*Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, 'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?'* [19]*He asked them, 'What things?' They replied, 'The things about Jesus of Nazareth,* who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,* [20]*and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him.* [21]*But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.* Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place.* [22]*Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning,* [23]*and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive.* [24]*Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.'* [25]*Then he said to them, 'Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!* [26]*Was it not necessary that the Messiah* should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?'* [27]*Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.* [28]*As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on.* [29]*But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them.* [30]*When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them.* [31]*Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.* [32]*They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us* while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?'* [33]*That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together.* [34]*They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!'* [35]*Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.* –NRSV

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Mennonite Church USA

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

'Painholders' helpful

Michael King's "Painholders on Holy Ground" (February) is a helpful article in many ways. He's right to highlight the role of painholders in fostering dialogue and resisting the impulse to divide. But even more important is his suggestion that we imagine a context where the "closed" and the "open" value each other for the very qualities they usually criticize. One such context is the U.S.-led empire in which "we live and move and have our being." Its impact on our moral and spiritual health is so pervasively and overwhelmingly negative that we instinctively know we need everyone's strength to resist. And when we consider the global destruction toward which the empire is leading us, we quickly recognize that we can ill afford to alienate those who are gifted allies in our struggle to articulate another way. As I read the biblical stories, people of faith have often viewed their day-to-day disagreements within the larger frame of empire. We should do the same.—*Berry Friesen, Lancaster, Pa.*

I loved these words in King's article: "So the painholders look for God's spoor even in the desolate deserts of division." I'm not sure I understand the entire article—I had to read parts of it several times—but when I came to this line, I was glad I had read it carefully. —*Janet Berg, Seattle*

Thanks for Schmitt story

Thank you so much for helping us to tell our story in "It's About Forgiveness" (March). It is our prayer that the article will touch and bless everyone who reads it. We appreciate your care and sensitivity as you helped us share our journey to forgiveness. This journey has been freeing and healing. We still miss my dad and feel his absence every day, and we take comfort in knowing he is in heaven. As Matthew West sings in his song "Forgiveness," "Forgiveness. / It'll clear the bitterness away; / It can even set a prisoner free; / There is no end to what it's power can do; / So, let it go and be amazed by what you see through eyes of grace; / The prisoner that it really frees is you." Blessings to you, Anna.—*Valerie Jones, Plain City, Ohio*

I just finished reading the story about the Schmitts. I was so moved. I wrote a story about them for Everence a couple of years ago and had the privilege of meeting them in person. They delighted me.

I was so sad to hear of his tragic death. I thought many times of the young men involved and knew they would be burdened by the tragedy. Thank you so much for telling this story. Jean and Valerie's journeys are amazing, as well as the congregation's and Mitchell's. This type of story is the reason why publications like *The Mennonite* exist. It's inspiring, specific and helps us all ask how we can be more forgiving. The writers in my department know I have very high standards for writing—and you exceeded them. You got out of the way of the story and let it tell itself.

I couldn't put it down. Anna, I am very glad to see you in your new role and able to move your readers with your writing.—*Kirsten Klassen, Elkhart, Ind.*

Our Mennonite evangelical faith

I thank Brother Myron Augsburger for challenging us to examine our Mennonite evangelical faith (March). The favorite Bible text of Menno Simon's was 1 Corinthians 3:11, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." With this text Menno challenges us to build our faith on the foundation that Christ Jesus laid down for us in the four Gospels, the evangel. As a retired Mennonite pastor of 42 years, I like a missional emphasis that keeps together the three stories of Luke 10 and 11: (1) the sending out of the 72 disciples to call people to repentance and faith, (2) the Good Samaritan and ministering to the needs of people with our human resources and (3) Mary worshiping and learning at the feet of Jesus coupled with the disciples learning to pray.

In every congregation, some people will be better at helping with inner spiritual needs, some at ministering to physical needs and some at helping us worship and learn at the feet of Jesus. As pastors and congregations we may examine our commitment to the evangel, the Gospels, to see if we are keeping a good balance of these three aspects of mission in our life together. *—John F. Murray, Hesston, Kan.*

Punk rock band thoughts

I'm very concerned with the link that Sara Dick attempts to make between the action of the punk rock band Pussy Riot and John the Baptist in "Our Punk Prayers" (February). Is she implying that Pussy Riot is in any way calling society to repentance? (Matthew 3:7b-8) or that their song "Punk Prayer: Mother of God Chase Putin Away" is in any sense an actual prayer? It may be true that Pussy Riot is trying to expose injustice within Russian society, but in no way are they "pressing the same questions as John did, though in secular terms." Don't forget, there was another group pressing these same questions in secular terms within Russia's history—the Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin. Neither in Communism nor in the "secular" terms of today's culture exemplified in Pussy Riot do I see a link to John the Baptist's call to repentance and to "prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Mark 1:3).*—Matthew Ingersoll, St. Paul, Minn.*

Many thanks to Sara Dick. Like many, I've been admiring Pussy Riot from afar for their political voice, their bravery and their creative expression. Sara helped me make some important connections from a faith perspective as well, deepening my appreciation for "those who protest injustice in the balaclavas on the altars of our churches." Their secular perspective aside, I can hear an echo of John the Baptist and even my Russian Mennonite ancestors in the punk prayers.*—Jim Miller, Sarasota, Fla.*

LGBT and the church

Amid the debate on homosexuality, a Scripture that challenges me is: "I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—that is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:1,2, NIV 2011). *—Daniel J. Reinford, Lancaster, Pa.*

I just read the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board's statement regarding their discussions of inclusion of LGBT people. Stutzman mentions that he has received more than 200 responses to the Mountain States action with a majority disagreeing. Does that mean that the hundreds of names on welcoming letters, open letters and voices of welcoming groups in churches all over

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

This April issue helps us focus on Easter. Isaac Villegas, one of our columnists and pastor at Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Church, offers the cover story (page 12) on the "mystery of God's peace." He reflects on the part of the crucifixion story when the guilty man on the cross asks Jesus to remember him in his kingdom. We are challenged when Jesus radically invites him.

"I'm unsettled by Jesus' invitation because that place is my hope, too. Jesus invites the violent subversive next to him to the same eternal party he promised us," Villegas writes.

The second feature article on page 15 offers a dialogue on the Resurrection between Andrea Lommen, an astrophysicist and yoga instructor, and Chad Martin, a pastor.

"Easter is a thin place. Life and death are bound up in the same miraculous moment. ... The Christ of eternity walks around, looks no better than a gardener and bears the scars of brutal suffering. In him, there is no distinction between divinity and humanity," writes Martin in the conversation.

During this Lenten season, we also keep in mind the importance of Jesus' humanity and our own. Several stories in this issue relate to this concept. The coverage of the February women's conference, "Honoring the Diversity of Women's Voices in Theology," includes information and stories from women embracing their bodies and their humanity (page 32). The story from Mennonite Mission Network on page 35 tells of a gathering of Latin American women that focused on renewal from Scripture and its impact on spirit, mind and body.

Finally, Gordon Houser's Mediaculture column includes a brief review of *The Son of God*, a new film about Jesus that includes the Easter story.*—Editor*

Executive Board appoints task force to frame questions for CLC

ELKHART, Ind.—The Executive Board (EB) of Mennonite Church USA has appointed a task force to frame the questions for a discussion at the March 20-22 Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) meeting in Newton, Kan., in response to the decision of Mountain States Mennonite Conference (MSMC) to license a pastor in a committed same-gender relationship.

The EB decided to create the task force during its Feb. 13-15 meeting in Harrisonburg, Va. The task force's role is outlined in a statement released by the EB in response to MSMC's action to license Theda Good on Feb. 2.

While the statement had support across the EB, it did not pass unanimously. The full text of the statement is available at www.themennonite.org.

According to moderator-elect Patricia Shelly, chair of the task force, the group has a limited mandate, that of "framing and facilitating the CLC discussion so that the CLC can give counsel and a recommendation to the Executive Board."

After receiving the CLC's counsel, the task force will compile the feedback and bring it before the EB for processing at its June 26-28 meeting in Chicago.

The task force consists of members of the EB and CLC: Patricia Shelly (chair), EB moderator-elect, Newton, Kan.; David Boshart, EB member, Wellman, Iowa; executive conference minister for Central Plains Mennonite Conference; David Maldonado, CLC member, Fort Myers, Fla.; moderator, Iglesia Menonita Hispana; pastor, Iglesia Menonita Arca de Salvación, Fort Myers, Fla.; Donna Mast, CLC member, Scottdale, Pa.; executive conference minister for Allegheny Mennonite Conference; Gene Miller, CLC member, Wellsville, N.Y.; executive conference minister for New York Mennonite Conference; pastor, Yorks Corners Mennonite Church, Wellsville, N.Y. *—Mennonite Church USA*

Larry Bartel

Hesston College holds international celebration

Hesston (Kan.) College students Sho Ishihara (Gunma-ken, Japan), Ayaka Senoo (Kanagawa-ken, Japan), Narumi Hayano (Kiyosu-shi, Japan), Danika Saucedo Salas (Santa Cruz, Bolivia), Shikou Morishita (Tokyo, Japan), Misaki Hirayama (Chiba, Japan) and Kento Ueda (Miyahi-ken, Japan) merge their cultures during the college's annual Cultures Fair Feb. 20. International students shared their customs, culture, music and food with the campus community during the celebration. More than 60 international students from 17 countries are part of the Hesston College community during the 2013-14 year.*—Hesston College*

Longtime biology professor dies suddenly

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—A. Wayne Wiens, Bethel College professor emeritus of biology, died unexpectedly Feb. 6 from complications of a fall suffered in December 2013. He was 77.

He was born Oct. 31, 1936, grew up on a farm near Hillsboro, Kan., and graduated from Hillsboro High School.

He completed a natural science major at Bethel in 1958, followed by a master's degree in zoology at the University of Kansas.

In 1960, Bethel recruited Wiens for a two-year appointment to teach biology, just days before he would have committed to a term of service in agriculture in Bolivia.

Wiens taught at Bethel for most of the next 50 years.

He earned a doctorate in biochemistry and cell biology at Northwestern University, Chicago, including a year research at the University of Bern, all funded by a National Science Foundation graduate fellowship; did two years of postdoctoral work; and spent three years as chair of the biology department at Kalamazoo (Mich.) College.

Wiens is survived by his wife, Gail Lutsch, Bethel professor emeritus of art, Newton; two children, Amy Wiens Columbus, Ohio, and Eric Wiens, El Cerrito, Calif.; two brothers, Paul Wier (Dolores), St. George, Utah, and Wendell Wiens, Newton.*—Bethel College*

Soldiers continue to arrest children in Hebron

AL-KHALIL (HEBRON)—On the evening of Feb. 28, soldiers arrested eight Palestinians. Six of them appeared to be under 16, and two were clearly younger than 12. Soldiers took the boys into the military base at Bab el Baladiya at the entrance to the Old City and after about an hour took them all away in military jeeps.

The arrests bring the total of child arrests and detentions documented by internationals working in Hebron during the month of February to 18. This number by no means reflects the total number of arrests and detentions of Palestinian children by Israeli forces in the city.

Palestinian children in Hebron are routine victims of racial profiling by Israeli soldiers who are looking for children who may have thrown stones on another day. Often the children are innocent but once in custody feel they are pressured by soldiers to identify other children or adults from photos. Palestinian children arrested by Israeli military authorities have no access to their parents or legal representation.—*CPT*

Bluffton University photo

Shaving to fight cancer

Darryl Nester, a Bluffton (Ohio) University mathematics professor, smiles as a stylist from The Curling Iron in Bluffton shaves off his hair Feb. 27. Nester joined members of the Bluffton baseball team and others—including football player Conner Sheehan (to Nester's right)—in having their heads shaved as part of a fund-raiser to support childhood cancer victims. The team has raised about $25,000 over the past three years for cancer victims.—*Bluffton University*

MECN names Linda Taylor new coordinator

Kathryn Aschliman

GOSHEN, Ind.—Mennonite Early Childhood Network (MECN), partner of Mennonite Education Agency (MEA), has named Linda Taylor, Muncie, Ind., as MECN coordinator.

MECN was established in 2005 to address the care and education of children from birth through kindergarten. The mission of MECN is to assist in developing the whole child—spiritually, physically, emotionally, socially and cognitively—within a framework that reflects an Anabaptist interpretation of the Christian faith by providing information and resources for parents and educators of children in this age range. She replaces Kathryn Aschliman, who has served as coordinator since MECN's 2005 inception. Taylor, assistant professor of education at Ball State University, has served on the MECN committee from its beginning. Her most recent project for MECN was an October 2013 survey of pastors, Christian educators and directors of early learning centers designed to identify constituents and determine how best to serve the needs of early childhood.—*MEA*

MDS, Catholic Charities partner to help families

PERTH AMBOY, NJ—Catholic Charities, Diocese of Metuchen (CCDOM), and Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) have partnered to repair and restore homes destroyed by Hurricane Sandy. More than a year after the Storm, thousands of families are still unable to inhabit their homes in New Jersey.

The partnership between CCDOM and MDS is making it possible for families to return to their homes and neighborhoods, in homes rebuilt by volunteers recruited by MDS.

"This partnership is consistent with the mission our organizations share: to help others in their time of need," says Larry Stoner, Disaster Response Coordinator (East), MDS, and Marianne Majewski, executive director of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Metuchen.

The MDS volunteers are housed by Catholic Charities, Diocese of Metuchen, which includes Hunterdon, Middlesex, Somerset and Warren counties. The Mennonites bring their own tools, equipment and food. CCDOM is providing all building supplies through a grant of funds from Catholic Charities USA.—*MDS*

Unique MBA program to shape leaders for the common good

GOSHEN, Ind.—Business and organizational personnel who want to develop their leadership skills, enhance productivity and increase profits while contributing to the common good now have the chance to enroll in a one-of-a-kind Master of Business Administration (MBA) program.

Three institutions affiliated with Mennonite Education Agency—Bluffton (Ohio) University, Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in Harrisonburg, Va., and Goshen College—have joined forces to launch "The Collaborative MBA" to shape transformative leaders.

The 36-hour program will focus on "skills in entrepreneurship, shared vision development, mutual accountability, financial integrity, continuous innovation, empowerment of people and teams and systems thinking," says Michelle Horning, chair of the business department at Goshen College.

The program director of The Collaborative MBA is Jim Smucker, formerly president of the Bird-in-Hand Corporation and board chair of the Lancaster (Pa.) Chamber of Commerce.

For more information, visit collaborativemba.org.—*Bonnie Price Lofton of EMU*

Easter in Emmaus

Isaac Villegas is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Church.

Cleopas and another disciple are walking the long road from Jerusalem to Emmaus when a stranger interrupts their sullen conversation with a question: "What are you discussing?" He just wants to talk, but the two disciples are annoyed at first: "Are you the only stranger who doesn't know what has taken place?" Despite their irritation, Cleopas and his friend let the stranger walk with them as they talk about the Messiah's execution, about an absent corpse, about the Scriptures and God's promises.

Along the way, the disciples experience a change of heart—something about the conversation changes their disposition toward the stranger. We don't know how the change happens. We can't see it: the soundlessness of transformation, the subtleties of metamorphosis.

We do know that when they find themselves at a crossroads and the stranger is about to go on without them, Cleopas and his friend refuse separation. "They urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us.' " And he does. And, in their house, the truth flashes before the disciples, illuminating their eyes. They can now see that the stranger is a friend, that the stranger holds their salvation in his hands. Because they offer an invitation, Cleopas and his friend are in a position to see the truth. Why do they tell him to stay? Because they desire him, because they want to be with him.

> "Stay with us." All of us want to hear these words. All of us want this invitation.

"Stay with us." All of us want to hear these words. All of us want this invitation. We want someone to want us. We want to be desired—for someone to see us, to look in our eyes and recognize us, know us and say, "Stay with us." Why? Because we desire fellowship, because we find God's life in holy friendships and because the Bible tells us that hospitality to strangers makes room for Christ's presence.

"Stay with us." This invitation inaugurates the church: Where two or three are gathered, Christ is there. Cleopas and his friend show us how to become the church, how to become people who welcome Jesus into us: into our homes and buildings, into our worship and discernment, into our congregational and denominational life.

"Stay with us." I've heard these words, spoken to me by Mennonite disciples, sisters and brothers who have welcomed me into their church. They have shared with me, once a stranger to Mennonite life, a faith handed from generation to generation. I'm here, with you, learning how to belong and discovering to whom I belong. We are bound together through baptism and Communion and church membership, all of which, I'm learning, summon me to belong to a group of people from whom we, as a denomination, are trying to divorce ourselves. Our church system has estranged our LGBT sisters and brothers, rendering them perpetual strangers by means of our institutional documents: our statements and guidelines, our agreements and covenants, all of which insist on categories for human beings that are supposed to disappear in the church; for as the apostle Paul declared, "there is no longer male and female." In Christ's church, Paul wrote, "you are all children of God ... you belong to Christ."

"You belong." Yes, you, my reader. You, sister and brother—God's children, all of us, God's beloved. You who are embraced by the Holy Spirit and drawn into the church by God's love. You who share with us the gifts of song and sermon, who hold our babies and teach our children, who cook for our potlucks and manage our buildings and write our theology and administer our finances. You who stay with us, with your church, even when we sin against one another.

I'm grateful for you who are LGBT, because you have stayed with us even though we have official documents written against you. Your steadfast love for the church, despite rejections, bears witness to a God who loves us despite our sins—a God who overflows with patience and long-suffering, a God who loves us with a stubborn love, refusing our refusals and rejecting our rejections. You—my sister, my brother—you love us with God's love.

Your love for our church teaches me how to love, how to love our church and our God, to love the One who somehow thought it was a good idea to get us all mixed up together—all of us, as strangers become friends and enemies become companions. I hope that as we stay—as we hold on to the church, as we hold on to one another—we may find ourselves with strangers whose eyes glimmer with salvation, strangers whose hands offer the bread of life. TM

The plight of COs continues today

On the morning of May 27, 1918, my grandfather James Hostetler of Baltic, Ohio, joined dozens of other young men on a train bound for Camp Sherman, a military training facility at Chillicothe, Ohio. At the time, there was no provision in the U.S. Military Code for alternative service. So like other conscientious objectors who refused to wear a uniform or join in the military training, he faced ridicule, isolation and physical abuse for holding firm to his convictions. In his recent book, *Pacifists in Chains*, Duane Stoltzfus, professor of communication at Goshen (Ind.) College, tells the story of Mennonite COs in World War I in lively detail and focused especially on the experiences of four Hutterite young men, two of whom died in prison at Fort Leavenworth following their mistreatment.

Those stories are now nearly a century old. In the years following World War I, Mennonites joined other peace churches to promote legislation that made alternative service a legal option for conscientious objectors to war. Today, most countries around the world recognize the principle of conscientious objection to military service.

For Sang-Min Lee, however, a 27-year-old member of the Grace and Peace Mennonite Church in Seoul, South Korea, the stories of Mennonite COs in World War I sound remarkably familiar. Soon after he became a Christian, Lee was moved by Jesus' teaching to love our enemies, especially his rebuke to Peter for defending him with a sword in the Garden of Gethsemane. As he learned more about the Christian faith, Lee's commitment to the gospel of peace deepened, putting him on a collision course with the Korean government.

Since the Korean War began in 1950, South Korea has required all able-bodied men to serve for a period of time in its armed forces, with no option for alternative service. In 1953, the war ended with an armistice rather than a peace treaty, meaning that the peninsula is technically still at war. Indeed, fears of a potential invasion from North Korea remain high. In 2008, Korean legislators scuttled a proposal to allow alternative service for COs; since then, the Korean Constitutional Court has upheld the law that punishes COs with prison sentences.

According to a report released by the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights in June 2013, the overwhelming majority of imprisoned COs worldwide—92.5 percent—are South Koreans. Between 2004 and 2012, an average of 660 conscientious objectors were jailed each year in South Korea, almost all of them Jehovah's Witnesses.

Sang-Min Lee is likely to become the first Mennonite in South Korea to be imprisoned for his convictions.

In a recent interview conducted by Heather Schellenberg and Michael Harms, English teachers in Korea who attend Grace and Peace Mennonite Church, Lee noted that the training and culture of the military are inherently violent. Being a willing participant in that structure, he said, would change who he is, making him "a victim as well as an offender."

If he is found guilty, Lee will likely face a prison sentence of at least 18 months. But the consequences for COs in Korea go beyond prison. On the basis of his criminal record, Lee recognizes that he will have "a bad reputation in society" and will likely be barred from many career paths for the rest of his life. Even more painful for him is the realization that his decision will bring him into serious conflict with his family. "I fear that my family will fall apart because of my decision," Lee said.

Yet he remains confident in his convictions. "I want the next generation to live in a better place with respect to individual choices and decisions," he said.

The struggle Lee faces in Korea is not unique in our global family. Mennonite young men in many other countries—among them Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Chile, Brazil and Bolivia—also face the question of how they will respond to obligatory military service.

In the months ahead, pray for Sang-Min Lee and other people of conscience who are willing to forfeit personal liberty, reputation, financial security and even family for their decision to follow Jesus. Let the Grace and Peace Mennonite Church in Korea know that they are not alone in helping Lee stand firm in his convictions. Speak out in support of the courageous resisters, peacemakers and reconcilers around the world who testify to the fact that love is more powerful than fear and that life is more powerful than death.

An interview with Sang-Min Lee can be found at: http://bit.ly/1dNx7hX TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

Sang-Min Lee is likely to become the first Mennonite in South Korea to be imprisoned for his convictions.

Disaster capitalism: the corporate takeover of education

We've all heard the many criticisms of U.S. education, how it's going downhill, not competitive with the rest of the developed world. But how true is that? And how did it get so bad?

Yes! Magazine devotes most of its spring issue ("Education Uprising") to such questions and tells stories of schools and people who are doing creative work at educating students in new, effective ways.

In his article "The Myth Behind Public School Failure," Dean Paton notes that until around 1980, America's public schoolteachers were held in high esteem. He traces the turn in public opinion to a PBS series in 1980 called *Free to Choose*, in which Milton Friedman devoted one episode to "the idea of school vouchers, a plan to allow families what amounted to publicly funded scholarships so their children could leave the public schools and attend private ones."

Meanwhile, Jonathan Kozol, an author and advocate for public schools, called vouchers the "single worst, most dangerous idea to have entered education discourse in my adult life."

Then, in 2001, comes "No Child Left Behind," which tied federal funding for public schools to student scores on standardized tests. It also, writes Paton, "guaranteed millions in profits to corporations such as Pearson PLC, the curriculum and testing juggernaut, which made more than $1 billion in 2012 selling textbooks and bubble tests."

In 2009, after the economy collapsed, came a program called "Race to the Top," which provided grants to states for their public schools.

Both programs measured school success based on students' standardized-test scores.

Then, in early 2012, then-Texas Education Commissioner Robert Scott called such high-stakes exams a "perversion." Many Texas school boards agreed that tests were "strangling education."

In January 2013, teachers at Seattle's Garfield High School announced they would refuse to give their students the Measures of Academic Progress Test. That school's boycott "triggered a backlash to the 'reform' that began with Friedman and the privatizers in 1980," writes Paton.

He calls this education crisis a "manufactured catastrophe," part of what Naomi Klein calls "disaster capitalism." This follows a formula, writes Paton: "Underfund schools. Overcrowd classrooms. Mandate standardized tests sold by private-sector firms that 'prove' these schools are failures. Blame teachers and their unions for awful test scores. In the bargain, weaken those unions, the largest labor organizations remaining in the United States. Push nonunion, profit-oriented charter schools as a solution."

Why do corporations want to get involved in charter schools? Because, says Chris Hedges, the federal government spends $600 billion a year on education.

A few corporations already control the $20 billion to $30 billion a year textbook and standardized-testing industry, writes Paton.

He offers examples: In Michigan, charter schools cut instruction money, raised administration costs and came out ahead by $366 per student. In Ohio, charter school teachers make 59 percent of what public schoolteachers make.

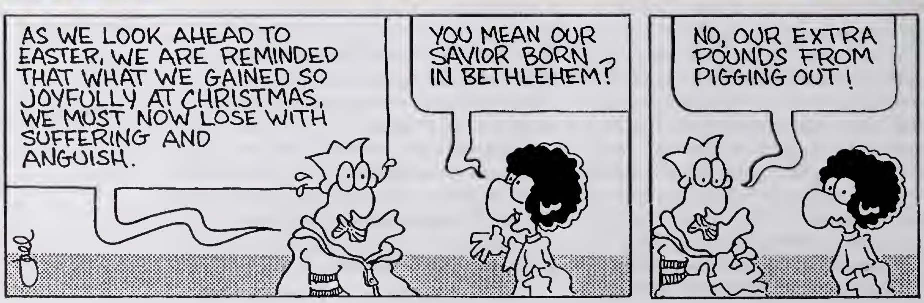
And are the charter schools making a significant difference? A Stanford University study showed that in reading, 25 percent showed better results, while 75 percent showed no improvement or "significantly worse" results. In math, the numbers were 29 and 71 percent.

Many factors affect education. One of the biggest is poverty. In another article in the *Yes!* issue, Lennon Flowers writes that "in many high-poverty schools, up to 60 percent of children experience stress levels that can impair functioning."

Education is a huge, important issue with no easy answers. But there are encouraging signs that changes are happening.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


AS WE LOOK AHEAD TO EASTER, WE ARE REMINDED THAT WHAT WE GAINED SO JOYFULLY AT CHRISTMAS, WE MUST NOW LOSE WITH SUFFERING AND ANGUISH.
YOU MEAN OUR SAVIOR BORN IN BETHLEHEM?
NO, OUR EXTRA POUNDS FROM PIGGING OUT!
Joel

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—compiled by Gordon Houser

> **“Can we take that guy’s watch and open a couple of drug treatment centers in Baltimore …? Just send the watch. You can keep your opinions.”**—The Wire *creator David Simon, after venture capitalist Tom Perkins (showing off his $374,713 watch) compared criticizing the rich to the Nazis’ persecution of Jews*

Camels had no business in Genesis

There are too many camels in the Bible, out of time and out of place, writes John Noble Wilford, retired senior science correspondent for the *New York Times*. Camels probably had little or no role in the lives of such early Jewish patriarchs as Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, who lived in the first half of the second millennium B.C., yet stories about them mention these domesticated pack animals more than 20 times.

268

of the 534 members of Congress have an average net worth of $1 million or more.—*The Week*

These anachronisms are telling evidence that the Bible was written or edited long after the events it narrates.

Two archaeologists at Tel Aviv University, Erez Ben-Yosef and Lidar Sapir-Hen, used radiocarbon dating to pinpoint the earliest known domesticated camels in Israel to the last third of the 10th century B.C.—centuries after the patriarchs lived and decades after the kingdom of David, according to the Bible.—*New York Times*

35

number of permanent jobs created by the Keystone XL pipeline, according to the U.S. State Department

168

anticipated maximum annual carbon emissions, in metric tons, produced by the extraction, transportation and burning of tar sands oil via Keystone XL

17%

increase in greenhouse gas emissions from tar sands oil, compared with regular crude—*The Nation*

Losing my religion

Among Americans who left their childhood religion and are now religiously unaffiliated, about one-quarter say negative teachings about or treatment of gay and lesbian people was a somewhat important (14 percent) or very important (10 percent) factor in their decision to disaffiliate. Among Millennials who no longer identify with their childhood religion, nearly one-third say that negative teachings about, or treatment of, gay and lesbian people was either a somewhat important (17 percent) or very important (14 percent) factor in their disaffiliation from religion.—*Public Religion Research Institute*

5.4%

decrease in violent crimes, including murder, in the United States in the first six months of 2013, compared with the same period in 2012.
—*New York Times*

Miracle or elaborate hoax?

The authenticity of the Shroud of Turin has been in question for centuries, and scientific investigations over the last few decades have only seemed to muddle the debate. Is the revered cloth a miracle or an elaborate hoax?

Now a study claims that neutron emissions from an ancient earthquake that rocked Jerusalem could have created the iconic image as well as messed up the radiocarbon levels that later suggested the shroud was a medieval forgery. But other scientists say this newly proposed premise leaves some major questions unanswered.

The Shroud of Turin, which bears a faint image of a man's face and torso, is said to be the fabric that covered Jesus' body after his crucifixion in A.D. 33.—*Live Science*

Numbers to ponder

- Number of people, in millions, in the United States in 2011 who speak a language other than English at home: **60.6**
- Number of unique languages spoken in the United States as of the 2006-2008 American Community Survey: **300**
- Number of those languages that are distinct native North American languages: **134**
- Number of Trident submarines at Naval Base Kitsap, 20 miles from Seattle: **8**
- Missile capacity on each submarine at Bangor: **24**
- Maximum number of independently targetable warheads each missile can carry: **8**
- Factor by which the minimum explosive yield of each warhead exceeds the yield of the Hiroshima bomb: **25:1**

—*Yes! Magazine*

Our crucified Savior and his questionable friends

a reflection on Luke 23:32-43

LiliGraphie/shutterstock.com

by Isaac S. Villegas

Hanging on the cross, tortured, almost dead, a convicted rebel asks Jesus for an invitation to God's paradise: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Crucifixion isn't a form of punishment for an ordinary thief or criminal. Only special people get killed on crosses. To crucify someone takes a lot of work, and it's costly. It's a torturous death reserved for people the Roman authorities consider subversives or revolutionaries, enemies of the state, threats to national security, sectarian radicals or freedom fighters. Crucifixion was a state-sponsored act that told the story, explains N.T. Wright, "of the uselessness of rebel recalcitrance and the ruthlessness of imperial power. It said, in particular: This is what happens to rebel leaders" (*Jesus and the Victory of God*, 1996).

In today's language, the people who ended up on crosses would be called terrorists, recalcitrant rebels involved in subversive conspiracies against the state. The scandal for Christians through the ages has been that Jesus, though wrongfully convicted, ends up hanging on the cross between two violent subversives. For the people passing by, Jesus would appear to be just one more radical, sectarian freedom-fighter. "Jesus was executed as a rebel against Rome," argues Wright, "the general impression in Jerusalem that day must have been that he was one more in a long line of would-be, but failed, Messiahs" (*Jesus and the Victory of God*).

The torture and killing of Jesus is a public humiliation. Rome has done it before and they'll do it again. The authorities try to make an example out of him, as they did to other Jews who claimed to be messiahs, liberators of Israel. The Romans put a sign on his cross: "This is the king of the Jews." In other words, the sign says, this is what happens to your messiahs. It's a public deterrent. All the other wannabe radicals will hear the news of the crucifixion and learn what happens when Jewish peasants talk too much about the promise of a kingdom other than Caesar's. Too much kingdom-talk will get you nailed to a cross. "Crucifixion was and remained a political and military punishment," writes Martin Hengel. "The chief reason for its use was its allegedly supreme efficacy as a deterrent" (*Crucifixion*, 1977).

> Jesus invites a convicted insurrectionist into paradise, with all the rest of the people God chooses, to an eternal life of working out the meaning of forgiveness and reconciliation, the meaning of the work of peace.

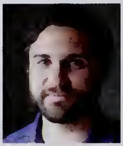
In this story the guilty man who hangs beside the innocent Jesus is the one who speaks the truth. The convict sees Jesus for who he really is. He calls Jesus a king: "this man has done nothing wrong." Jesus is innocent, he says, a casualty of people who are drunk on power.

After speaking the truth that no one else is willing to speak, the convicted rebel says to Jesus: "Jesus, remember me when you enter into your kingdom." And Jesus says: "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

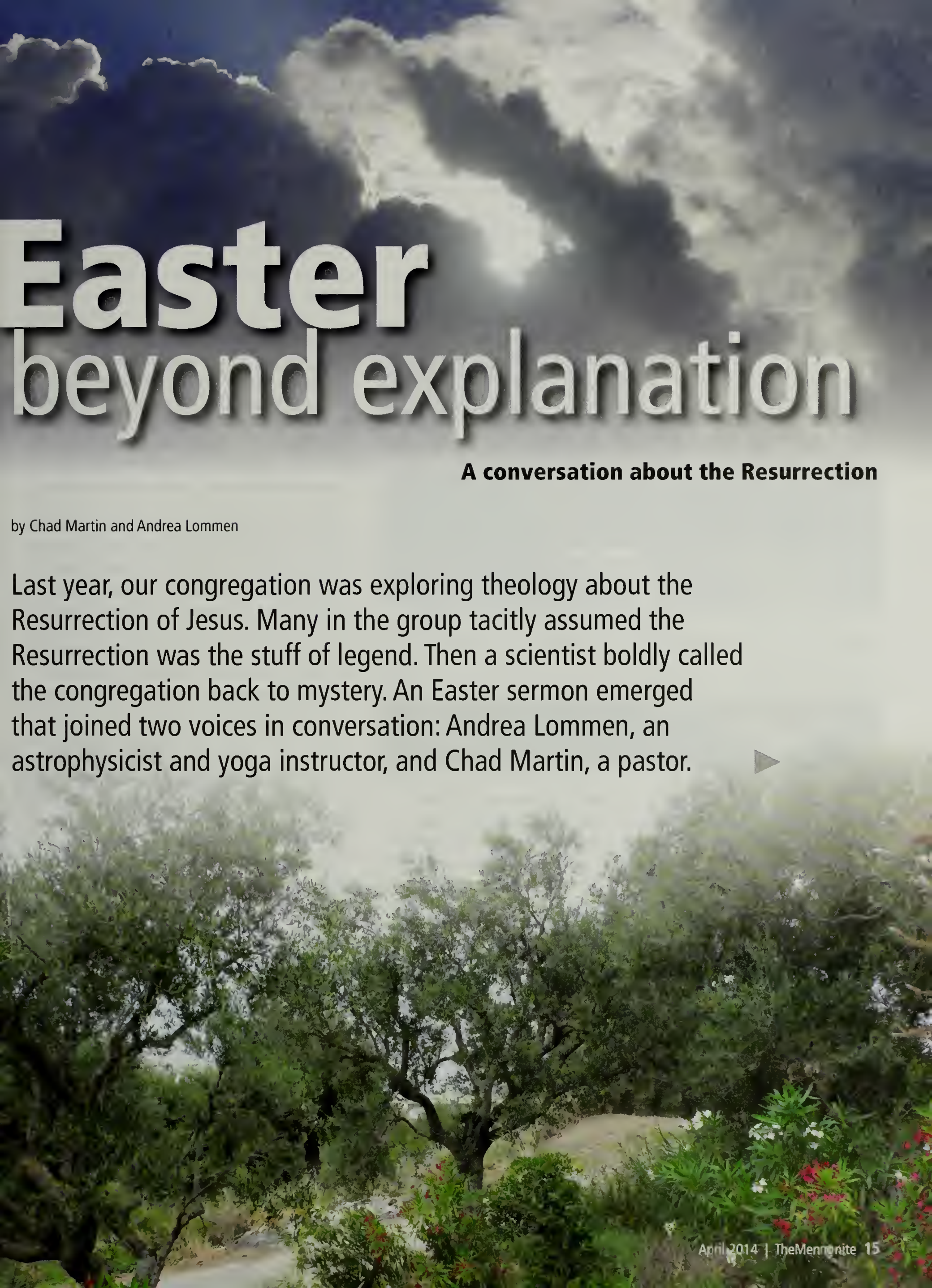
The crucifixion story from Luke 23 unnerves me because Jesus invites one of them into paradise to be his companion forever. "Truly I tell you," Jesus says, "today you will be with me in paradise." It's crazy enough for Jesus, with the thorns of death digging into his soul, to forgive his torturers and killers: "Father, forgive them," he prays from the cross, "for they know not what they do." That prayer for grace is shocking enough. Can you imagine a power of forgiveness that would enable you to forgive your killers as they are torturing you? That seems unimaginable, but we recognize it as good news, as a powerful display of God's grace.

But that Jesus invites the rebel into God's heavenly kingdom disturbs me. I'm unsettled by Jesus' invitation because that place is my hope, too. Jesus invites the violent subversive next to him to the same eternal party he promised us. Are we sure we want to hang out in God's paradise with an enemy like him for eternity?

The encounter on the crosses reveals the mysteries of God's peace. Jesus invites a convicted insurrectionist into paradise, with all the rest of the people God chooses, to an eternal life of working out the meaning of forgiveness and reconciliation, the meaning of the work of peace. To be drawn into God's eternal paradise is an invitation into the work of peace, which is the work of forgiveness, as we encounter people we have hurt and who have hurt us, as we sit together at the heavenly banquet, with friends and enemies, all God's guests, even the ones we didn't expect, even the ones we never wanted to see again, even the ones we don't think belong at the feast.



Isaac S. Villegas is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship. This reflection is adapted from a chapter of his book, co-authored with Alex Sider, Presence: Giving and Receiving God *(Cascade, 2010).*



Easter beyond explanation

A conversation about the Resurrection

by Chad Martin and Andrea Lommen

Last year, our congregation was exploring theology about the Resurrection of Jesus. Many in the group tacitly assumed the Resurrection was the stuff of legend. Then a scientist boldly called the congregation back to mystery. An Easter sermon emerged that joined two voices in conversation: Andrea Lommen, an astrophysicist and yoga instructor, and Chad Martin, a pastor. ▶

Andrea:

I remember talking with my mom, a biologist, when I was 12, about Jesus and about why they killed him. She said he was a powerful man, and people were upset by him. She told me that some people believe that he came back from the dead. She thought he didn't but that he lived on in the hearts and minds of people, just like we all do.

I realized recently that this is completely unsatisfactory to me, and I dislike the idea that Easter was just a political event that was upsetting to people. I think Easter was magical and mysterious and conveyed to us a critical message about the relationship of humanity to the divine.

My mother knew me well, and she knew that I loved logic and analysis. I later decided that I loved uncovering the mathematical underpinnings of our magical universe and became an astrophysicist. But through very different avenues—yoga and meditation—I also developed a sense that my skin is not a boundary of "me" in any way except the physical and that the physical is only a small part of the world.

These Resurrection stories are describing a thin place—or a thin time—a time and place when and where the boundaries between heaven and earth open up.

I have come to think that making mundane whatever happened that day is exactly not the point of Easter. Easter celebrates the absence of the boundaries between us—between the people in this room, people in other countries, people of different income levels, people you're mad at, between you and God, you and the universe, you and people throughout time.

Easter begins by dissolving the boundary between God and people. Jesus' life had already called that boundary into question. He said he was the Son of God. Sometimes he was man, sometimes he was God; sometimes he's the Son of God, sometimes he's the same as God. The line got blurry. His death and Resurrection dissolved that line even more.

Sometimes on Easter I asked myself whether any of this actually happened. Did he really die? Was he really resurrected? Was he merely resuscitated? I used to want answers, but now I just want the possibility that it all happened. I invite you to join me here, in this place of not knowing, in this place of holding all the possibilities in your heart and your mind and letting them all exist.

Chad:

The stories surrounding Easter underscore that Jesus embodies the boundary between God and us. In Luke's version of the Easter scene at the tomb, there are two men in dazzling clothes. In John's version, the two messengers are called "angels." In Mark, it's a "young man dressed in a white robe." Matthew's Gospel is the most dramatic: An angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled back the stone at the tomb. Who are these figures? Not gods. Not people like us. The boundary between is blurred. As Andrea puts it, suddenly at the Resurrection of Jesus, there was a flurry of activity between heaven and earth. Whatever boundary was there before, seems to have disappeared in these stories.

And the stories of the resurrected Jesus appearing to the disciples later point in the same direction. Our rational minds want to explain what happened. Maybe Jesus was just a ghost. But the more we try to grab hold of it and explain it, the more it all sounds like nonsense. We do better to observe what Jesus' followers perceived. They were convicted that Jesus lived on in some way radically different from what they had ever seen. In ways he seemed the same to them, and in other ways he was unrecognizable.

Think of the stories of the disciples seeing Jesus after Easter morning. In one account, Mary confuses him with the gardener. He was the same as before but different somehow. Or the story of two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They encounter a man there and invite him to their house for dinner. Only after the meal was served do they realize the man is Jesus. How could this be? He was the same but different. Then there's the story of the disciples sharing a meal in a private, upper room. The story takes time to explain that the door was locked. Then suddenly Jesus was with them. If he was not a ghost, how did he get there? Yet Thomas, when needing to confirm that all these stories really were about their friend Jesus, finds evidence in the fleshy, real scars on the hands of Jesus. He was the same, if different, too.

These Resurrection stories are describing a thin place—or a thin time—a time and place when and where the boundaries between heaven and earth open up.

Easter is a thin place. Life and death are bound up in the same miraculous moment. The familiar and the strange show up in the same body. The Christ of eternity walks around, looks no better than a gardener and bears the scars of brutal suffering. In him, there is no distinction between divinity and humanity.

Andrea:

The fact that not everyone describes seeing Jesus in the same way just adds to this idea that people are trying to describe something that is beyond their understanding, and certainly beyond words.

Whatever happened that day was entirely outside everyone's experience—outside our five senses. People had never seen anything like it. And then for 30 years people tried to describe the indescribable, and what we got were the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John trying their best to record what it's like to be in the presence of that knowing: the knowing of the divinity of human and the humanity of the divine.

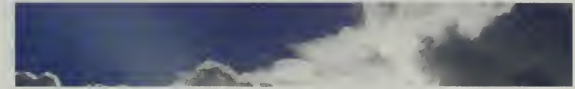
I wonder if God was trying to show us that we are all divine. We talk about Jesus as an example of how to live, but I wonder if we can't take that farther than we usually do—past the feeding of the poor, the helping of the sick. I wonder if we were meant to recognize that we are all divine. You are God, and God is you.

This may sound incredibly egotistical. In the end I think it's humbling. It means that you are part of a much larger force. It also means you are God just like the person next to you is God. So you are the same. You've got your skin, and they have their skin, and the two of you look different, but maybe this larger force exists in, around and through you and is you at some much deeper level.

God is among us and within us all the time, and on this day 2,000 years ago, whatever keeps that notion obscured from us disappeared. Up until this year, Easter for me has been a celebration that once a long time ago God was among us and flowed easily between the realm of God and human, but I'm asking us to expand our celebration. This year, can we say the curtain never came back in? In other words, could Easter be about reminding us that God is always among us, and perhaps we, you and I, can flow seamlessly between the realm of God and the realm of human.

Whatever happened on the day of Jesus' resurrection was apparently not easy to explain. But don't let people's inability to describe it prevent you from believing that some marvelous thing happened that perhaps revealed the depth and wonder of the universe. And certainly don't let it prevent you from believing that revelation can happen to us every day. I don't see why we shouldn't expect this sort of blurring of the line between God and human everyday.

For me that's the point of Easter. It's a day to notice all these boundaries are at best tenuous but more likely nonexistent. Keep noticing that as long as you can—not just today but this week, this month, this year—until next Easter, when you're reminded again. You are divine, and God is human. God is in you, but you cannot contain what that is. It spills out of you and flows through you and into the person next to you. It flows effortlessly from here across the world and back in a moment. It flows across the universe and back in a moment. It's magical and mystical and is beyond understanding, beyond measurement, beyond rationality, beyond explainability. You don't have to try to understand it but do revel in being a part of it.



God is among us and within us all the time, and on this day 2,000 years ago, whatever keeps that notion obscured from us disappeared.

Chad Martin is associate pastor at Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster, Pa.

Andrea Lommen is associate professor and chair of the Department of Physics and Astronomy at Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster.

A new creation

A lesson on not judging someone based on outward appearances

by Don Clymer

"I love Americans," Pedro announced to the small group gathered for the Wednesday evening Bible study. "I love your music, your language, your people."

My wife, Esther, and I were leading a group of 18 students from Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va., and were visiting a small Mennonite congregation on the north side of sprawling Mexico City. They were hosting us during Holy Week for a time of working, worshiping and playing together.

I was immediately put off by Pedro's announcement. His speech was slurred, his eyes glazed over, and he wore beads around his neck and on his wrists while stuffing white ear buds in his ears. Often I had been accosted by similar statements and people in my years of learning and serving in Latin America. What was his agenda? He had to have one, I assumed, because he was too effusive, and I was pretty sure he was inebriated.

The following day the church had planned a day for the group of us to enjoy the many activities available in Chapultepec Park in central Mexico City. There were museums, a zoo, a castle, rowboats and an amusement park, to name a few. We were to divide into groups and chose our activity. At the end of the Bible study, the pastor asked for a show of hands of those who were willing and able to accompany us for the excursion. Pedro was the first one to raise his hand.

After a wonderfully harrowing ride navigating Mexico City's public transportation system with a walk, two bus transfers and the metro, we emerged out of the bowels of the subway system into the bright, crisp air of the park. Five students along with Esther and me, chose the zoo. So did Pedro. Probably with the same misgivings about Pedro that I had, the five students hurriedly dashed off to the entrance of the zoo, disappearing among the multitudes. Esther and I were stuck with Pedro. Three hours until we were to reunite with the rest of the group for the next activity. Three hours with Pedro. I dreaded every minute.

The human tendency is to prejudge someone by their outward appearance. This is where the word "prejudice" comes from. We decide what someone is like by their race, their age, their sex or any of a number of other factors without bothering to get to know them. My prejudgment of Pedro was that he was a drunk and would be a difficult person to relate to because he "had an agenda" and probably wanted something from me. I didn't want to be bothered by him. By prejudging him before getting to know him, I denied his God-image and likeness. By so doing, I reduced him to something less than human.

I was not the only one to prejudge Pedro. "I made a quick judgment about him as being someone I did not want to relate to, and I did not want anything to do with him," wrote one of my students in her journal. "I was judging him for what I saw and the little I knew of him." Because of the scene at the Bible study, I'm sure many of our students felt the same way.

God knows our tendency to judge a person by how they look on the outside, so when Samuel was looking for a king to replace Saul, God warned him: "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7 NIV).

Israel had already been fooled by a tall and handsome Saul, the man who had the stereotypical physique of a king but the heart of a pagan. Even in spite of this disaster, Samuel looked for these same qualities in the sons of Jesse. He had to be straightened out by God. What is in one's heart is more important than the way one looks.

By prejudging Pedro before getting to know him, I denied his God-image and likeness. By so doing, I reduced him to something less than human.

Paul, in acknowledging his own prejudices before he had an encounter with the Risen Christ, writes in 2 Corinthians 5:16-17 (CEV), "We are careful not to judge people by what they seem to be," or, as *The Message* puts it, "by what they have or how they look." I certainly judged Pedro by the way he seemed to be and the way he looked, I didn't look at his heart.

As Esther, Pedro and I proceeded through the zoo, Pedro wanted to know the English name of every animal we came across. We became friendlier as the day wore on, enjoying his unbounded, childlike enthusiasm for all the animals and their English equivalents.

We decided to leave the zoo and have lunch together. As we ate, he told us his long, torturous story. He was studying biology at the university when he got into a bad crowd and started doing drugs. Up to that point he was doing well enough

Brent Anders

When we went to see the reenactment of Jesus' trial and crucifixion in his gang-infested neighborhood on Good Friday, Pedro led the way. Everywhere people greeted him.

that he had several offers to continue his academic career in graduate studies or to work with some government agencies; offers that would have set him financially for life.

The deeper he got into the drug scene, however, the more distracted he became from his studies. It wasn't long until he had to live on the streets full-time to support his habit. He dropped out of school and had never returned. What had been a promising career was left shattered on the rubbish heap beside a pile of syringes. He tried to earn a living selling candy and chewing gum from a portable stand he carried through his neighborhood.

After many failed rehabilitation programs, he wandered into an evangelical church and accepted Christ. He had been clean for over a year when we met him. "The only thing that saved me was Christ," he testified. Because of his abuse of all sorts of drugs, his brain was fried. This explained his slurred speech and his halting behavior—making us jump to the conclusion that he was drunk.

The passage from 2 Corinthians 5 continues, "Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new." Other versions call this a "new creation." In spite of his outward appearance, Pedro was a new creation. He had a new heart. Before I got to know his story, I could only see his outward appearance.

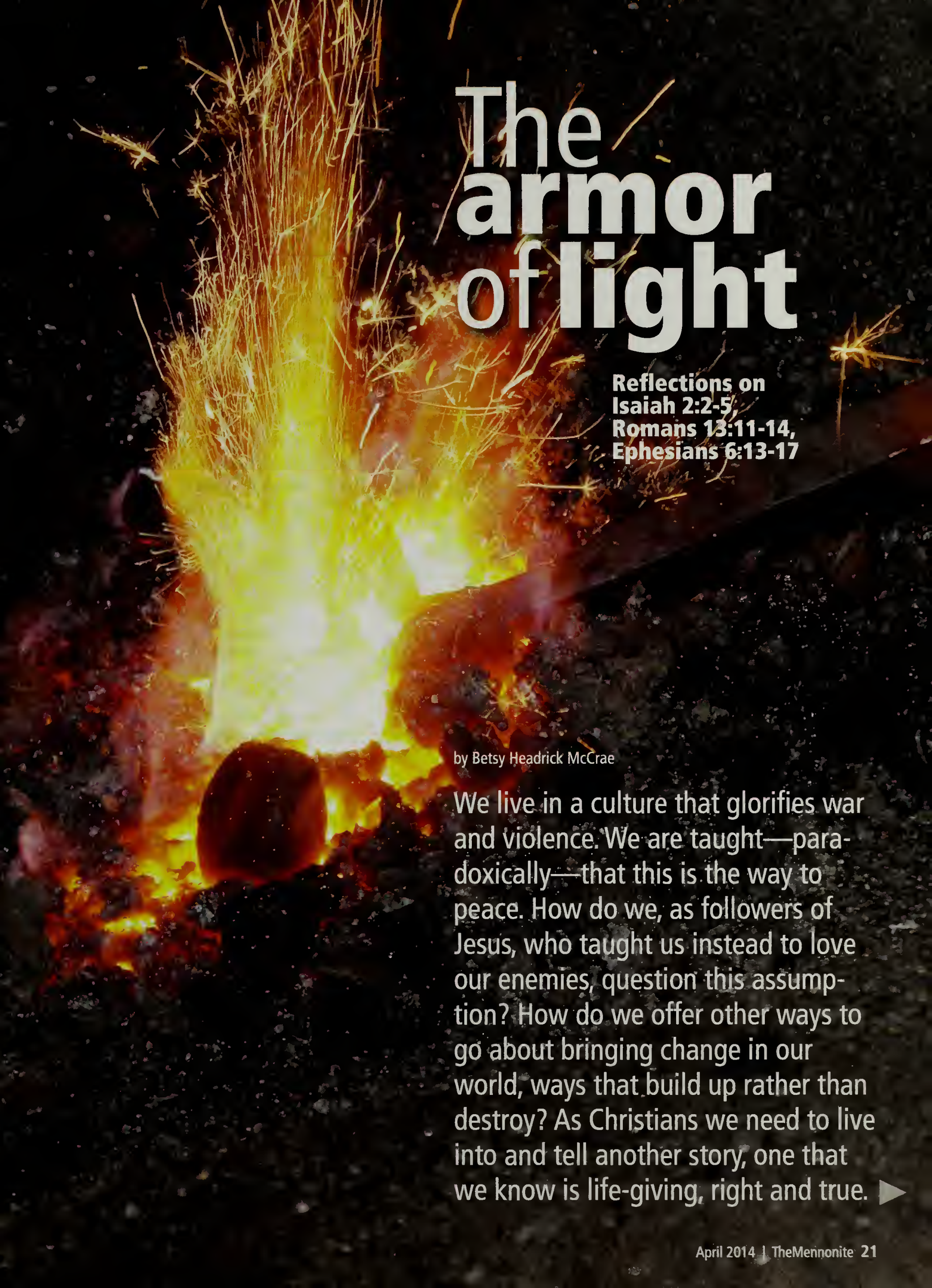
Pedro accompanied our entourage from EMU everywhere we went. As the week wore on, he endeared himself not only to Esther and me but to all the students. When we went to see the reenactment of Jesus' trial and crucifixion in his gang-infested neighborhood on Good Friday, Pedro led the way. Everywhere people greeted him. Since we were with him, in spite of sticking out like sore gringo thumbs, we felt safe and in good hands. He was the first to give out specially prepared invitations to attend his church in his neighborhood. His own transformed life was an even more powerful testimony to his old friends.

"As I started to hear his story, I started to understand him more and not have a total fear of him," wrote the same student. "His story is a powerful [one] and shows what Jesus can do in people's lives. I wish I hadn't judged Pedro so quickly." Another student gave Pedro his English-Spanish Bible. Pedro's face radiated his gratitude. We were slowly beginning to see his heart, to see his God-image, to see his new creation.

When we left Mexico some three weeks after our time with this fascinating and hospitable Mennonite church, Pedro was among the people to show up at the airport to bid us farewell. Many of the church members brought parting gifts. Pedro brought his candy stand and passed out candies to the group with his huge, toothless smile.

Our final church service together was Easter Sunday. During that service, we circulated around all the members of the church greeting them with the phrase, "Christ is risen," to which the other responded, "He is risen indeed." When I came to Pedro and looked him directly in his eyes, an emotion came over me, and I said to him, "Christ is risen, and I see him in your face." This was the same face that I had rejected just a few days earlier. Without hesitation, he replied, "Yes, I was dead and now I am alive. I have risen from the dead like Christ." I could not hold back the tears as I hugged him. Pedro was a new creation. So was I.

Don Clymer teaches Spanish and humanities at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and leads cross-cultural seminars to Guatemala and Mexico. He also serves on the pastoral care Team at Lindale Mennonite Church where he is a member.



The armor of light

Reflections on Isaiah 2:2-5, Romans 13:11-14, Ephesians 6:13-17

by Betsy Headrick McCrae

We live in a culture that glorifies war and violence. We are taught—paradoxically—that this is the way to peace. How do we, as followers of Jesus, who taught us instead to love our enemies, question this assumption? How do we offer other ways to go about bringing change in our world, ways that build up rather than destroy? As Christians we need to live into and tell another story, one that we know is life-giving, right and true. ▶

According to Isaiah 2, God has and will teach us an alternative story, a different way of doing things. It is an approach that doesn't ignore the inevitability of conflict. Instead it encourages us to trust in the power of God to hold things together without using weapons of force and destruction. "[God] shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4).

In Colorado Springs, Colo., a father and son team, Mike and Fred Martin, have started a new venture called RAWtools. They have found ways literally to beat the metal from guns into garden tools. They do this publically so that they can involve people in the process and talk about why they are doing it. Their purpose is to help people unlearn the practices of violence and war. This is what we need: tools to help us unlearn what we have been taught and are being taught by the culture around us. We need to transform what is destructive in our lives and in the world into something that is life-giving.

Paul reminds us that changing the world starts with changing ourselves.

This is Paul's message in his letter to the church in Rome. Looking at these texts from Isaiah and Romans side-by-side, I was struck by something new. "Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light" (Romans 13:12). As in Isaiah, Paul is taking something used for war and giving it another, peaceful purpose: Put on the armor of light.

Like many good Mennonites, I have always had a problem with Paul's use of military paraphernalia as a positive metaphor for the Christian life. I have found it hard to read chapter 6 of the letter to the Ephesians, where we are encouraged to "put on the whole armor of God."

But perhaps with the words from Isaiah 2 ringing in my ears, I can think about this differently. Perhaps Paul's co-opting of the armor of war for peaceful and productive purposes may just be what it means in practical, everyday terms for us to beat our swords into plowshares, our spears into pruning hooks and to study war no more.

Paul reminds us that changing the world starts with changing ourselves. "Let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13:13-14a).

What are those things in our own lives that may be pulling us away from God and God's ways? Revelry, drunkenness, debauchery and licentiousness may or may not be the things we struggle with, but I bet most of us can identify with quarreling and jealousy. We can also identify with greed and selfishness, which we sometimes justify as a desire to protect ourselves or our families. Perhaps we are hardhearted and self-righteous, dismissing the needs of those around us. Or perhaps we're lazy, complacent, unwilling to enter what may push us out of our comfort zone or demand too much of our attention. This list could go on, but you get the picture. You know who you are and what it is that you struggle with.

All these pressures, these opportunities to act contrary to the leading of God's Spirit, are real. They are so real that sometimes we lose hope. We feel caught in a way of living that is harmful to ourselves and others. But there is hope. Now is the moment to awake from sleep, Paul says. Wake up to the possibilities of change that God has to offer. Here's something to help: Put on the armor of light.

Fasten the belt of truth around your waist and put on the bullet-proof vest of right living. If you've become skilled in rationalizing why it's OK to fudge on your taxes or why you need the newest iPhone or tablet or why you are more deserving of these things than others, commit yourself to facing up to this. Put on the belt of truth, tighten it around your waist, even if it pinches. Let it shape you. Let it pull you in. Let the truth hold you together and set your feet on a new path. Then choose to act in ways that are right—right for you, right for your neighbors, right for the world. Acting rightly in the way of God's Spirit is your protection, your bullet-proof vest, a valuable part of the armor of light.

"Take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one" (Ephesians 6:16). There are plenty of flaming arrows out there. Plenty of urgent and attractive messages whose purpose is to convince you to put yourself first at all cost. Plenty of vitriol against those who are different or think differently. Plenty of temptations to exploit the innocence or the blindness or the need of others for your own benefit. Plenty of reasons why all these things are OK. These flaming arrows are not to be taken lightly. They are powerful and can start real fires. We need protection. We need a faith that is strong and that covers us from head to toe. Take up the shield of faith; it is a vital part of the armor of light.

Take the helmet of salvation. Paul often speaks of changed thinking, the renewal of the mind. This is both an ongoing process and a new birth kind of thing. It is both the life-changing realization that we truly are acceptable in God's eyes, and it is the need for us to keep working on what it means to live into this salvation. When we put on the helmet of salvation, it focuses and protects our minds. It doesn't allow us to forget who we are. This right focus is a crucial part of the armor of light.

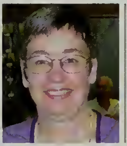
And finally, take up "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). Along with all the protection, we are given a tool, the sword of the Spirit. This is a powerful tool. It has the ability to effect change, to cut away what is creating harm and neglect. It can open up new ways of thinking. It can render hurtful messages powerless. The sword of the Spirit is empowered by God and therefore is never used to tear down but instead to prepare the way for building up. God's word, as spoken from the mountaintop, is the word of peace among nations, among peoples, among friends and among enemies. It is the word of peace and well-being for our own lives. The sword of the Spirit is an integral part of the armor of light.

The nations—all of us—stream up to the mountaintop to hear the wisdom of God. We wish to learn. We wish to change the status quo, to live in a world that is peaceful and fair. On the mountaintop, God "shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples." Conflict still exists, but we learn peaceable ways of dealing with it. We repurpose the weapons of destruction. The violent way of the world is transformed. Thanks be to God.

What does this mean on a personal level? Paul lays it out for the church in Rome: "You know what time it is," he writes. "Now is the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; … Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; … put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13:11-14).

The sword of the Spirit is empowered by God and therefore is never used to tear down but instead to prepare the way for building up.

In our everyday lives it is possible to live into this beautiful vision of a peaceful world. The weapons of war have become tools of peace. Military paraphernalia have been transformed into the armor of light. Pick up these tools, put on this armor, trust in God's presence with you, then act as if you truly believe. Go out and change the world.



Betsy Headrick McCrae is pastor of Glennon Heights Mennonite Church in Lakewood, Colo. This article is adapted from a sermon she gave there.

RAWtools, Inc. gets its scriptural motivation from Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3. We want to be comprehensive in our efforts to move our communities away from gun violence and violence as a whole. It's not enough to just make a lot of tools from guns. We need to help teach each other new ways to solve our problems through relationship, dialogue and alternative means of justice, i.e. restorative justice practices and victim-offender dialogue.

Our nation has been through a variety of horrific events surrounding gun violence, and this has brought the conversation to the forefront of our current events and "water cooler" conversations. It has largely become a binary conversation of either more guns or more laws. RAWtools wants to open a new option, a third way. What if we made a commitment to solve our problems without guns and violence? You can find statistics to support more laws to keep guns off the streets. You can find statistics to support adding more guns to deter bad things from happening. In either case, people are afraid of guns.

By using weapons to make garden tools and other hand tools, we are creating a symbol for change and we're asking you to participate. We are asking our communities to dare to use our imaginations to change our impulse. It doesn't have to be fight or flight. Some good old-fashioned fellowship wouldn't hurt to get things started.—*RAWtools.org*

Patient endurance

Why we need the message of the Book of Revelation

by John K. Stoner

The book of the Revelation to John has with good reason been called the most revealing book of the Bible. Its message is a call to relentless persistence in the work of witnessing to God's way to run the world, which was lived and taught by Jesus. And it is an ear-splitting proclamation that the ways of greed, consumption and homicidal violence will fail miserably, while those who practice love and generosity will endure forever.

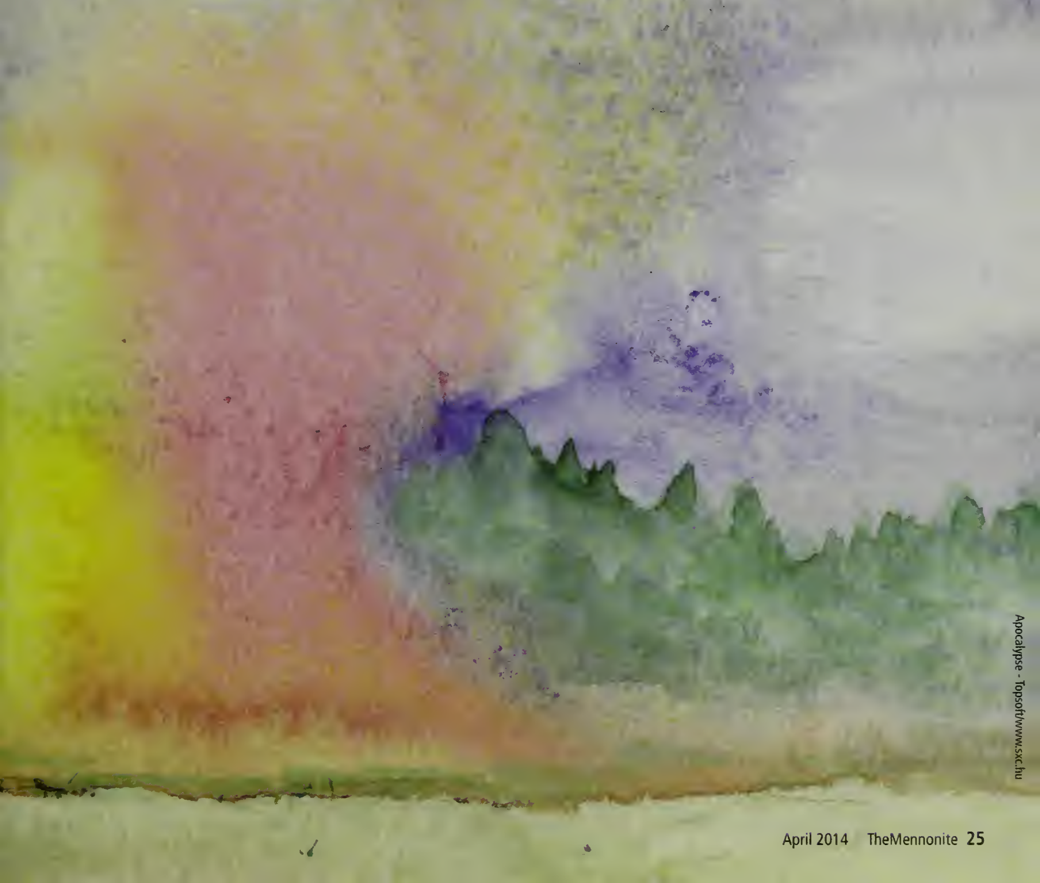
It is sad, at the same time, that no book of the Bible has suffered more at the hands of its interpreters.

Revelation is, by its own account, a prophetic book by a prophet. But the word "prophecy" has misled many people, and it's likely that most people assume either that Revelation is about future events or that the book can be safely ignored because it has long since been proven mistaken about future events.

Both assumptions are wrong, though not quite equally wrong. The first is wrong because the book is primarily about the writer John and his readers' present, not about the distant future. The second assumption is wrong in supposing that Christians can ignore the book at no loss to themselves, but it is right in saying the book does not present a blueprint of events at the end of history.

John the Revelator wrote precisely to assure mere mortals like you and me that no good deed goes unrewarded and that unbridled greed, organized fraud and homicidal state violence will ultimately fail.

There is one profoundly important thing the book does say about the future, namely that God and good will triumph in the end. That is significant, and whoever says we can do without that message is either richly endowed in ways I don't understand or benighted in ways that leave me dazzled with awe and trembling with curiosity. I would like to meet the rare people who are awake



Apocalypse - Topsoft/www.sxc.hu

to what's going on in our world and say they don't need assurances that good is overcoming evil and obviously destined to triumph in the end.

By all evidence, John the Revelator wrote precisely to assure mere mortals like you and me that no good deed goes unrewarded and that unbridled greed, organized fraud and homicidal state violence will ultimately fail, abjectly and absolutely. I ask you sincerely, Do we need to hear that message today?

Who among us today takes the church as seriously as John the Revelator took it? Who expects as much of it?

The theme and message of the book is summed up in 3:10: "Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth." When we put ourselves on the side of creation's truth and loving relationships, we have God's promise that we will prevail in the struggle between good and evil that marks the life of the individual and humanity as a collective organism.

Revelation is a book to answer the question, "What is happening to our world?" And that is not just the world of my lost job or your lost retirement savings, although those things matter, but our world of air and water and food and shelter, and wars and mindless destruction of the environment on which life itself depends. The large themes of the first and second testaments, and of Jesus' teaching, are the major themes of Revelation. That is how I read Revelation.

At the outset, we will help ourselves greatly to understand John's message if we permit him, like ourselves, to know less than everything about everything. That is, we must allow him to get some things more right than others, some things really right and others demonstrably wrong.

For example, John knows, or at least says, less than he should about the power of love to transform lives and situations. And in his enthusiasm to assure us that evil will not triumph in the end, he portrays God's hand as destroying evildoers rather than, as he might, show God working through Jesus in humans to transform people in ways that begin to strangle evil itself—in Paul's words, overcoming evil with good.

As a prophet hearing a word from God, John speaks to the situation of immense struggle in which he and the churches and people to whom he wrote found themselves. His readers had already seen too many of their brothers and sisters die at the hands of imperial and financial powers. They were greatly tempted to give up the struggle to live against the tide of pressure to join the powers of commerce, consumption and imperial force—to just go along to get along (see those forces especially in chapters 17 and 18).

Into this situation, John brings all the powerful sights and sounds and smells of the gigantic drama he portrays in cumulative layers, overflowing cauldrons, torrential winds, rain and hail, fire and light and water and green trees and life, and relentless persistence in goodness and community and peace.

The central image of victory in this prophetic letter to churches looks small and helpless, a mere lamb. But the claim is that the lamb has conquered. And linked with the lamb image is that of a rider on a white horse, out of whose mouth comes a sword—yes, indeed, but a sword of the word. Watch for that sword and that word throughout this prophecy; see it destroy evil and create good over against the swords of the imperial powers that slay humanity and decimate the earth. The lamb and the rider on the white horse, of course, are both Jesus.

John believes in the power of words and the word, which is nothing other than the power of truth, ranged over against all the lies and riches and blandishments and swords of kings and merchants and magnates and great men (6:15). He calls on the angels (spirits, animating visions) of seven churches to call those churches to "repent:" that is, change your mind, away from all your inclinations to believe the promises of the red horseman of war, the black horseman of capitalism, and the pale horseman with all its powers of death. John's call is to stay with the white horseman of life, who conquers with the sword of his mouth/word/truth (chapters 1, 6 and 19). Sometimes a lamb, sometimes a rider on a white horse, but always the word. A word to the churches, which we need to hear today as much as then.

We need to hear Revelation's naming of the church as the community that, over against the empire, will prevail at the end of history. The saints, the redeemed of the church, already share with John "the kingdom" as well as the persecution and the relentless persistence (1:6, 9) and will eat "the marriage supper of the Lamb" when history reaches its fulfillment. Who among us today takes the church as seriously as John the Revelator took it? Who expects as much of it? Can it be doubted that we should all expect more of the church and give more to it than we do?

And what should we expect of the church? We should expect what the voice is giving to the seven stars of the seven churches: wise critique and strong encouragement, using the standard of "patient endurance" or "steadfast resistance" (1:9; 2:1,19; 3:10), which is the "work" (2:2,19,23; 3:1,2,8,15) by which the churches and saints make their "faithful witness" (1:5). It must not escape us that the churches are judged by their "works": "I know your works," the angel says time after time (a major theme of the Bible, see e.g., Ephesians 2:10).

We must inevitably ask: Is my church, is your church, giving us guidance and nurture in making a faithful witness to the "faithfulness of Jesus" (1:5; 14:12)? Jesus maintained faith in God and God's way of tending creation and loving enemies right to the cross. Are we doing this?

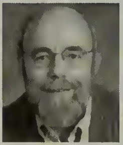
First, is the church helping us see through the lies that corporations, the government and their media mouthpieces are telling us, each playing the role of the beast that arises out of the earth (chapter 13)? Or are we believing the lies, like the Monsanto lies about caring for the earth and sustainable agriculture?

Second, is the church renewing for us the vision of the triumph of the way of nonviolence, the Lamb's way? Do we believe that the nations will be judged and found wanting, or do we expect the great United States of America to prevail and save us? At the same time, do we believe those nations will be transformed by the life symbolized in the leaves of trees that grow by the river of the water of life (chapter 22)? Is the church's worship, are our lives as worship, helping us live the life of restorative justice and active peacemaking that demonstrates the bankruptcy of the world's trust in war "against terrorism"?

We need Revelation's celebration of the Creator, which is inseparable from celebration of the wisdom of creation, that is, from the knowledge that the way this world works sustainably was built into its genetic and relational reality. This means that no technology that violates the fundamental laws of nature's infinite interconnectedness is sustainable. And no economy based on mindless extraction of irreplaceable resources from the earth's finite store and that denies that generosity, not greed, is the fundamental reality of human nature is sustainable.

The future lies with those who know and live as if God knew what God was making in the billions of years of this earth's history. The church, with good help from Jesus speaking in the book of Revelation, could help us know this.

No technology that violates the fundamental laws of nature's infinite interconnectedness is sustainable.



John K. Stoner is a member of Akron (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

Keeping immigrant families together

A Mennonite Central Committee East Coast immigration program works to keep families together by providing legal advice and immigration assistance to people in Florida's Anabaptist churches.

by Miriam Copp Johnson and Linda Espenshade

Citizen 4474/creativecommons.org

When pastor José Acosta took five men from his Florida congregation on his fishing boat one Friday, he had no idea the men would be separated from their families by the end of the day.

Acosta thought this was just another outing on the water, a common activity he offered the men of Jesús Redentor de Vidas Brethren in Christ congregation of Lake Worth. They would socialize, and he would get a chance to impart some spiritual lessons.

But when they returned to the dock that January day in 2012, they were met by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers who accused Acosta of smuggling the five Honduran men, who had no documentation, into the country.

Desperate at the thought of being deported and separated from their families, the men considered taking off in the boat or swimming away but decided that would be futile. Pedro Molina managed to alert his pregnant wife by text before an officer took his phone.

"Let my brother go. His wife is pregnant and due anytime," Darwin Molina pleaded with the ICE officers for Pedro. Darwin himself has two children, and his cousin Robert García has three. All five men were handcuffed and taken away.

"I was angry," says García, who had lived in the United States for 14 years. He and the Molinas worked as painters. "It broke my heart to think of leaving my children and wife here."

As the men were taken away, Acosta searched for an attorney. He learned from another Brethren in Christ pastor about Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) East Coast's immigration program, which offers affordable, Christian legal counsel to members of Anabaptist churches in South Florida.

The immigration program offers immigration education, individual consultation and legal representation. Andrew Bodden, MCC East Coast Florida program and diverse constituent coordinator, leads the program. When immigration situations arise in Anabaptist churches, he is the one pastors call, day or night.

When Acosta called, Bodden offered the men legal services of MCC's consulting attorney for about one-third the average legal fees an immigration attorney charges. Acosta only asked for services for García and the Molinas, because one of

Desperate at the thought of being deported and separated from their families, the men considered taking off in the boat or swimming away but decided that would be futile.

AMBS

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GOD'S RESTORING WORK IN CREATION

Janeen Bertsche Johnson, Campus Pastor

During orientation a few years ago, we asked returning students and employees to share some of their favorite spots on campus with our new students. I loved hearing why people had developed connections with certain spaces.

If I answered my own question today, I would name the AMBS prairie, planted in 2007, as part of the library construction. Now that the native wildflowers and grasses are well-established, I enjoy discovering the diversity of life found there. In a place that had been a corn and bean field and then a mowed lawn, we have restored the land to something like its original state, and now "the pastures of the wilderness overflow" with beauty and life. (Psalm 65:12)

During the last decade, AMBS has given increased attention to issues of creation care. Certainly a major reason is that several students, employees and volunteers have nudged us to recognize new possibilities for the land that we steward: we could plant wildflowers instead of using fossil fuels to mow so much, we could build our new library to Green Building standards, we could replace old fixtures with energy-efficient ones, we could harness the energy of bees to provide honey for the meals we eat together, we could expand the garden to provide food for hungry people in Elkhart County. We have been gifted with community members who are passionate about sustainable living, local food and understanding our local environment.

AMBS has begun to embrace these concerns as an integral part of our institutional identity. We are catching a vision for participating in the nurturing, restorative work of our Creator God.

We recognize that God has given humanity the responsibility to care tenderly for the earth, not to exploit it. And we affirm that God so loved the world—the entire created cosmos—that God sent Jesus to redeem it (John 3:16). The ministry of reconciliation that Jesus has entrusted to us (2 Corinthians 5:18-20) includes reconciliation with the soil, the water, the air and everything that lives in and on them.

As we look toward the future, we will give more attention to how these themes are woven throughout our curriculum, and to the ways they challenge and reshape our lifestyles. In addition to theological reflection, we want to model sustainable practices for students and church leaders. We are also dreaming of ways our campus can be a teaching resource for the whole community.

It is my hope that our study, worship and life together at AMBS will continue to show us ways we can participate in God's restoring work in creation as well as in the lives of people. ●

Janeen Bertsche Johnson (right in photo above) is a naturalist and each year leads a hike during the all-seminary retreat at Camp Friedenswald, near Cassopolis, Mich. Participating are Thomas Hughes, Sara Wenger Shenk, Steve Mezsick, Sylvie Guden, Eric Vandrick, Gerald Shenk, Jeff Hochstetler, Kelsey Shue Hochstetler.

Janeen also represented the seminary at the second annual gathering of the Seminary Stewardship Alliance in October 2013, along with student Ryan Harker.

AMBS Window is a publication of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary • www.ambs.edu

The Bible and creation care in my faith

Ryan Harker, Master of Divinity student

In preparation for further graduate work in New Testament, my studies at AMBS concentrate on the Bible. I am convinced that a faithful reading of the Bible is a tremendous resource for a Christian creation care ethic.

Both in my study of the Bible and in many other courses, I have taken seriously Wendell Berry's advice to "learn to read and understand the Bible in the light of the present fact of Creation" ("Christianity and the Survival of Creation"). For me, this means getting to know the agrarian world in which the Bible was written. In doing so, I'd like to help the church realize the truth of what Berry writes in another place in the same essay:

> How we take our lives from this world, how we work, what work we do, how well we use the materials we use, and what we do with them after we have used them—all these are questions of the highest and gravest religious significance. In answering them, we practice, or do not practice, our religion.

As an aspiring biblical scholar and as a Christian, I believe that any legitimate Christian ecological ethic is grounded in the biblical text, and any good reading of the biblical text should lead a community to care for the land. It has been the case for me.

As an agrarian text, the Bible is the primary and most important resource for the church in an age of ecological disaster. It can lead us back to God's vision for true life. AMBS has been an incredibly fruitful place for me to cultivate this love and respect for both the Bible and for God's creation. ●

Ryan Harker is a Master of Divinity student at AMBS. He co-leads creation care efforts at AMBS along with Janeen Bertsche Johnson, campus pastor. Ryan also helped to set up the composting system for the student-run vegetable garden on campus, and he and Brenna, his wife, tend several gardens—including one on campus—during the growing season.

Photo above: The AMBS library, completed in 2007, was built with Green Building standards. Surrounding the facility are fields of prairie grasses, beds of native flowers and rain gardens that return rainwater to the aquifer.

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ALUMNI NEWS

Janie Beck Kreider (Master of Divinity 2013) serves on the team that is writing creation care curriculum for MC USA congregations. She is involved in Mennonite Creation Care Network and works at Merry Lea Environmental Learning Center, Wolf Lake, Ind.

Ray Epp (Master of Arts: Peace Studies 2001) and Aki Aratani, his wife, are directors of Menno Village in Sapporo, Japan, a farm-based community, helping build relationships among people and between people and the land.

Matt Hickman (Master of Divinity 2008), associate pastor for Mennonite Church of Normal (Ill.), does consulting on land stewardship for two Mennonite camps and is cochair of the stewardship committee for the ParkLands Foundation which protects natural lands in McLean and Woodford counties in Illinois.

S. Roy Kaufman (Master of Divinity 1969) is author of *Healing God's Earth: Rural Community in the Context of Urban Civilization* (Wipf & Stock, 2013)

Andy Alexis-Baker (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 2007) is coeditor of *A Faith Encompassing All of Creation: Addressing Commonly Asked Questions about Christian Care for the Environment* (Wipf & Stock, 2014). ●

Creation as an other

Safwat Marzouk, Assistant Professor of Old Testament

God's creation and our place in it is considered in several AMBS classes, and we are working to incorporate this theme more deliberately. One course, taught by Safwat Marzouk, challenges how we view ourselves in relationship with creation.

In the course "Constructing the other in the Old Testament" we study how human beings tend to define who they are by differentiating themselves from others who surround them based on ethnic, racial, economic, gender, sexual and bodily categories.

Students look closely into the historical and literary settings of many biblical texts that deal with notions of inclusion, exclusion, hierarchy, etc. The goal of the class is to provide biblical insights for the contemporary church on how to deal with others in a world that tends to create binary opposites of us vs. them.

This binary opposite perspective influences how humans relate to the nonhuman creatures. For a long period of time biblical scholarship has argued that redemption and salvation should lie at the heart of theological reflection, and that it should be seen as something opposed to creation theology. According to this perspective, if nature and creation were to figure in theological discourse, then this would happen in a way that serves the central theme of salvation.

Engaging with more recent trends in biblical scholarship, we discuss how creation as an other invites us to move even beyond the language of creation care in which creation is seen as an object. Seeing nonhuman creation as an other means treating it as a subject that relates to God, independently from humans, in doxology or rebellion. It also means we recognize it as a relational agent that influences humans and is influenced by humans. According to this perspective, creation and salvation are integral parts of God's work in the world. ●

For additional insight into Safwat Marzouk's work with self and other, listen to recordings of his sermon and lecture from Pastors Week: **www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek**

Photos above: (left) The Chapel of the Sermon on the Mount was refurbished and an annex added in 2011. One major goal was to improve energy efficiency in the 45-year old building. (right) Adam Graber Roth, AMBS student, established a beehive on campus last summer. Honey will be harvested for use with campus events.

YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

When you join the Fidelity Circle, one of the President's giving groups, your contributions save paper ... and thus save trees. That's because the Fidelity Circle is for paperless giving. As a member, you will receive all information from AMBS electronically. You may choose one of two secure options:

- Credit card: Your card will be charged either monthly or quarterly.
- Bank withdrawal: Your checking or savings account will have automatic monthly or quarterly debits. (Not available for Canadian banks.)

Visit **www.ambs.edu** and select *Give online*, or contact Missy Kauffman Schrock, director of development, mkschrock@ambs.edu or 800.964.2627. ●

Photo at right: AMBS students and several family members joined in a retreat focusing on water as they canoed down the Elkhart River last spring. Led by Janeen Bertsche Johnson, the group disembarked at the home of Sara Wenger Shenk, AMBS president, for lunch and a time of reflection.

PANORAMA

Conference on land and faith

AMBS will host "Rooted and Grounded: A Conference on Land and Christian Discipleship," Sept. 18–20. A call for papers is available at **www.ambs.edu/rootedandgrounded**. Suggested themes include watershed discipleship, land and place, eschatology and care for the land, place and contemporary life, and race and land or place.

Greg Boyd to speak at AMBS

Greg Boyd, PhD, internationally recognized theologian, preacher, teacher, apologist and author, will present a public lecture at AMBS on Thursday, April 24, at 7:30 p.m. Admission is by ticket only. To request a free ticket, visit **www.ambs.edu/gregboyd**

Journal explores economics

Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology focuses on economics in the spring issue. Read a selected article and find subscription information at **www.mennovision.org**

Enjoy recordings of Pastors Week and Martin Luther King Jr Day

You can get the benefit of the recent moving and challenging experiences in the AMBS learning community by listening to the recordings on iTunes U.

- **Martin Luther King Jr Day** brought a panel of three to campus, exploring issues of racism, violence and poverty in our communities. Speakers were Apostle Willie Coates Jr., Gilberto Pérez Jr., and Rev. Jennifer Tinsley.
- **Pastors Week** featured the five newest AMBS professors, speaking from their areas of expertise: Rachel Miller Jacobs, Andy Brubacher Kaethler, Safwat Marzouk, Jamie Pitts, Allan Rudy Froese.

Visit **www.ambs.edu/news-events/iTunesU.cfm** to access these recordings.

Summer hybrid courses

Hybrid courses, which combine online learning with one week on campus, provide an excellent opportunity for people from a distance to study at AMBS. Summer 2014 courses are:

- Canon and Community
- Gender and Justice
- Performing the Faith
- Pastoral Counseling and Theology

Visit **www.ambs.edu/academics/summer-courses.cfm**

Short course on Mennonite polity

A six-week online course on Mennonite polity is scheduled for May 7 to June 17. Instructors are Janeen Bertsche Johnson and David Boshart. For more information about this and other Anabaptist Short Courses, visit **www.ambs.edu/AnabaptistShortCourses** ●

PRESIDENT'S WINDOW

SARA WENGER SHENK

Ari, my three-year-old grandson, was filling his dump truck while digging in the flower garden last week when he discovered a clump of green sprouts pushing through the mulch. "Grandma, Grandma!" his jubilant voice rang out. "The seeds are sprouting!" After a brutally cold winter, fresh green life is astonishing.

The day before, Ari and I and his baby brother, Jacob, spent many minutes gently interacting with a millipede. We marveled at how its hair-like legs rippled in waves as it moved across the carpet. We wondered about where it lives, what it eats and who created it.

Care for creation begins with wonder—which is the heart of worship. I often remember Elizabeth Barrett Browning's words:

> Earth's crammed with heaven,
> And every common bush afire
> with God,
> But only he who sees takes off
> his shoes;
> The rest sit round and pluck
> blackberries.

Teilhard de Chardin, the Jesuit paleontologist, said, "Less and less do I see any difference between research and adoration." He seemed to get the connection between science and earth as a sacred gift from the Creator. This is not unlike what Chief Lawrence Hart describes in a chapter called "The earth is a song made visible: A Cheyenne Christian perspective" in a new book, *Buffalo Shout, Salmon Cry*. "Today, we need creative poets, composers, liturgists, and others to explore how to root our worship in the land. We need to sing the land, to experience it, to be transformed by its power, and so glorify God."

We need good science that teaches us how to restore ecosystems to a healthy, sustainable balance. And we need wonder awakened. "To cease to wonder, is to cease to be human," educator Thomas Green writes. "Wonder is the mother of motivation." Wonder is the gift and grace of the Creator when we stop to notice what is at our finger tips and sing out, "The seeds are sprouting!"

Staying alive to wonder: this is theology, this is prayer, this is worship—the mother of motivation to care for Creation. ●

the other men was immediately deported, and the other hired his own attorney.

Bodden turned the cases over to Rachel Díaz, a consulting attorney for MCC East Coast's immigration program and a member of La Roca Firme Brethren in Christ Church in Hialeah, Fla. She met with them and filed the proper paperwork in their defense.

Díaz, who had done immigration law for 10 years, seven for MCC East Coast, says she pushes each case to its legal conclusion because "each client is a person who works like a mule, doing difficult physical labor, and has a kid in the U.S. or his home country who he's helping. They have family, they have aspirations and hopes and dreams, and they are part of a community, be it a church community or another."

Acosta, who estimates that about 70 percent of his 200-member congregation is undocumented, says deportation creates "mayhem" for the family left behind, including loss of income. Children who are separated from their parents tend to rebel, he says.

When the five men were detained in January 2012, the people of Jesús Redentor de Vidas prayed and fasted and raised funds to support their families while they were in detention. The detainees prayed for a miracle and asked God to give Díaz wisdom to help them.

Through Díaz's work, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security administratively closed Robert's case. Without explanation, DHS also closed Darwin's case, even though it didn't have the same legal support Robert's did. The closures allowed both men to avoid deportation and to get drivers' licenses, though they do not have work permits.

With tears of happiness and kisses and hugs, the men were reunited with their families within six weeks of being detained.

"God is in this," says Díaz. "That's why it's good work to do. If God's willing to put his hand in it, I want to partner with God in it."

If God's willing to put his hand in it, I want to partner with God in it. —Rachel Díaz

Díaz continues to work with Pedro's case, but she expects his petition for legal status to be granted, since he is married to a U.S. citizen and they have a child. Pedro was released from detention in time to be at the birth of his son, Jayden.

"If we come to this country," Pedro says, "it's to be able to support our families. We come from poor countries and poor families. We want to move forward and improve our lives."

Díaz is pleased with the results of the cases. "Three families are staying together," she says. "We are hoping for the immigration reform to happen soon, so many of the families, if not all of them, will benefit from it and can be together and not live with fear."

Miriam Copp Johnson (left) and Linda Espenshade write for Mennonite Central Committee. To learn more about MCC U.S.'s work with immigration, visit immigration.mcc.org.

Through MCC's assistance, Pedro Molina, who was taken into custody by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, was reunited with his wife Sabrina in time for the birth of their son Jayden. MCC Photo by Silas Crews

Keep calm and lead on

Glen Alexander Guyton is director of finance and convention planning for Mennonite Church USA.

And they awoke him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm.—Mark 4:38-39

There is something to be said about leaders and how they deal with stressful situations. Anyone can lead during times of peace, but it is trial by fire that often shows us what type of people we are. Do those who lead possess a certain grace under fire or do they carry bellows that stoke the fires of fear until they are infernos? I have seen many a leader lose control during a time of crisis, at the exact moment when people most often seek sound leadership. Here are five things a leader should understand when managing people:

Don't be afraid of changing your mind or stopping a process, even it if embarrasses you.

1. Leaders understand that we are in the people business, which means that we are in the problem-solving business. We have a calling. People problems keep us employed. What did you expect? If you don't like people and can't love them despite their never-ending problems, switch to another profession.

2. Only firefighters are equipped to run into burning buildings. While some of us may think that we have an "S" painted on our chest, most of us are closer to Martha Kent than we are to a super being. A good leader has to realize his or her limitations. The limitations can be self-imposed to protect our families or they can be externally imposed through laws, policies and regulations. As leaders, especially as pastoral leaders, we have to understand when we need to dial 911 and call in the experts. A Master of Divinity degree does not mean a person is qualified to deal with mental illness, politics, finances or the law. While you may be a scholarly expert of God's divine Word, leave the burning buildings to the folks with hoses and fire-retardant gear.

3. Good leaders have a good exit strategy. Sooner or later, every leader has to navigate through a storm. Sometimes it is our "great idea" that gets us and those we lead smack dab in the middle of the tempest in the first place. The storm isn't the problem; it is surviving it that should be your priority. It would be wonderful if we could do a quick, "Peace be still," like Jesus, but since most of us don't have that kind of power we better find the most efficient and effective strategy to navigate out of stormy weather. The best strategy is just to avoid the storm in the first place, but again we are in the people business; storms will come.

4. Don't take yourself too seriously. A great leader never has to tell anyone they are in charge People already know. If you have to tell people you are the leader—that you are the boss—you probably aren't. You are probably in a position that you are underqualified to be in, and you are probably going to break something or be broken. Take note of point number two and get out before it is too late. Part of not taking yourself too seriously as a leader is being transparent. Be honest if you make a mistake. Don't be afraid of changing your mind or stopping a process, even it if embarrasses you. Also surround yourself with men and women who are strong in the areas where you are weak and who will challenge you constantly to improve. If, as a leader, you are the smartest person in the room, you need to go to a different room, because the organization will never grow beyond your limitations.

5. Leaders should not be distracted by bright and shiny things. Let's face it: Everyone that we lead has an important issue or cause they are dedicated to. In some cases, the people have given this cause the highest priority in their lives. But every cause is not our cause to champion as leaders. Every good thing is not a God thing; at least not if we as leaders understand our call. No matter how many critical issues, causes and matters of upmost importance come before our desk, the good Lord has only seen fit to give us 525,600 unexpandable minutes in each year to do everything that needs to be done. A wise leader has to prioritize and carefully choose those things they want to give their energy to.

As leaders our job is not to fix every problem, to martyr ourselves for every cause or to be the experts in every situation. Our job is to be aware of the big picture and equip those we serve to be their best and do their best in their appointed roles. TM

Doing church in the new millennium

The internet was alive for weeks with discussion about Millennials leaving the church, Millennials' desire to change the church and Millennials' effect on the church. The conversation, begun by Rachel Held Evans at CNN's Belief Blog, inspired hundreds of blog posts and untold hours of handwringing about culture, Christianity and our life together as people of faith.

While some decry the state of the church and the wisdom of Evans for raising the discussion, the conversations (and even arguments) we're having are exactly right. They are just what people of faith must do when culture shifts.

There are some indications that Millennials (the generation of people born between the mid-1980s and 2000s) are leaving church. Some writers of older generations (both in the church and in the press) have called Millennials selfish, narcissistic and shallow. They have claimed they are making demands that will break the church.

Someone, somewhere, is always declaring the death of Christianity. Every generation wails about the incapacity of the next, and every generation thinks it will do better than the generation that preceded it.

No doubt we are changing, and this is going to hurt. As God baptizes individuals, God also baptizes our communities, families and traditions, and baptism hurts. This is the refiner's fire, the transformation God promised us.

We are often confused about what it means to be transformed because we humans can't do it. We understand reformation because we are (in some limited way) capable of reformation, but transformation is not even related to reformation.

Let's say I have a table. It's a broken-down, ugly thing. All the legs wobble, and one has come off. The top has a crack in it, the apron is all gouged up, and the whole thing has water damage. I decide to fix up my table. I go out to my garage and glue the crack. I add new hardware to secure all the legs, replace the apron and sand it until it's smooth. Finally, I stain that table until it's so shiny it nearly glows. I take my table to the dining room, and my family stands and admires it. It is gorgeous. I have reformed my table.

But it's still a table.

God has a table, too, and it's just as ugly and sad as my table was, but God is not limited to the perceivable possibilities the way I am.

Perhaps God will turn the table into a bird or a droplet of water or a universe.

God is God, and God won't change, but everything else might. God might make us into something entirely new. How do we keep Millennials (and others) in church? Simple. We follow Jesus. We don't attract new people; Jesus does that. We're not transforming ourselves; Jesus is doing that. We're not creating church; we are the church that Jesus is continually rebuilding.

So we follow. We pray. We practice togetherness (talk, argue, shout, share, cry, lament, laugh, sing, teach, learn and kiss the wee babes) in ways old and new. We experiment. We unclench our fists (my church, my traditions, my faith). We invite and include, and when we screw up we say so. When church disappoints us we speak out, and when we see the church disappoint others we take notice and go to that place and search for Jesus and share the love that God has lavished upon us. We revisit Micah 6:8:

"He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?"

So simple, but we resist. I will be the shiniest table. Make of me a beautiful table, Oh God. Hush and follow, says God. I will make of you. I will do with you. I promise.

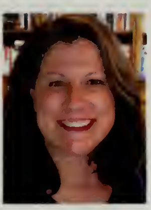
We meditate on Galatians 5:1, which says, "For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." We have not been set free in Christ to build institutions or to "win souls for Christ" or to do anything. We have not been set free to follow rules, and we most certainly have not been set free so that we might hit people in the head with our Bibles.

Simple freedom.

Glorious, wild, extravagant freedom—a gift, given freely. God does not seek our slavish devotion to rules but our exuberant devotion to the person of God and the way of Jesus. We walk together, with God and with one another, and the walking is the thing we are doing, and God is unrolling history as we walk.

God does not need our protection and God is not afraid. God is doing what God has always done: pursuing us, God's own, God's beloved.

Let's let God catch us. TM



Adrienne Jones is a member of Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church.

God does not seek our slavish devotion to rules but our exuberant devotion to the person of God and the way of Jesus.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Women are to be 'apostles to the Apostles'

About 200 gather for women doing theology conference.

Almost 200 women gathered for a theological conference Feb. 20-22 in Leesburg, Va. The conference was entitled "All You Need is Love: Honoring the Diversity of Women's Voices in Theology."

Themes from the event included self-love, God as Mother and acknowledging various identities among women.

Mennonite Church USA's Women in Leadership Project hosted this conference as "part of a larger tradition of Anabaptist theologians, ministers and lay people," according to information from the planners.

In the past, the denomination has hosted conferences for women leaders and women theologians, but this was one of the first conferences intentionally opened up to women from a variety of disciplines. The attendance was 194 individuals.

On Feb. 21, there was a love offering for the quarter-time position connected to the Women in Leadership Project. The offering raised more than $2,600.

From left, Linda Gehman Peachey, Lancaster, Pa., and Erica Littlewolf, Albuquerque, N.M., prepare to serve Communion during the love offering for the Women in Leadership Project on Feb. 21.

Three speakers shared stories that afternoon—Erica Littlewolf, of Mennonite Central Committee Central States, spoke about love in the light of indigenous contexts; Argee (Pya) Macliing Malayao, of an indigenous peoples' organization in the Philippines, spoke about love in the light of militarized contexts; and Linda Gehman Peachey, a member of th Women in Leadership Project steering committee, spoke o loving enemies and the challenges she faced while her area conference worked through the question of women in leade ship.

Malinda Berry, the theological responder for that group,

'God is a knitter': responses from participants

The conference stirred up the messiness of struggles, injustices and integrity with sharing differing life stories. I hold onto the words of Malinda Berry, "God is a knitter." We need the yarn and needles and an abundance of grace.—*Rhoda Charles, Lancaster, Pa.*

I found meaningful the ways the conference leaders addressed the pain surrounding our denomination's work around inclusion of its LGBT members.—*Audrey Roth Kraybill, Lancaster*

My circle group was a great blessing. These women had so much knowledge, and our conversations allowed our differing backgrounds and thoughts to collide creating new insights.—*Erin Sams, Henderson, Neb.*

Discovering diverse women doing theology—and doing it justice—was empowering for me, having lacked female mentors in church leadership.—*Sarah Bixler, Princeton, N.J.*

I heard a need to create safe spaces for those who have been marginalized by our tradition and the sacred texts to be able to share their stories.—*Kimberly Penner, Toronto*

In a world surrounded by pain, we should be continually asking, What do we need as a church to be healed, and how can we offer this healing to the world? Women have so much to share.—*Gloria Castillo, Jefferson City, Tenn.*

I was struck by how good it was to be among Anabaptist conversations of intersectionality—and not just the paying of lip service—but deep, vibrant conversations at the intersections of oppression and violence; people working and living at these intersections.—*Annabeth Roeschley, Washington, D.C.*

Aware that feminist theology validates personal experience, this conference failed to balance the experiential with adequate, disciplined, academic study in presentations. However, Kimberly Penner is a theologian to welcome for future decades.—*Dorothy Nyce Yoder, Goshen, Ind.*

I'm ready to be a leader that opens up new stories of how we see our bodies. I'm overwhelmed with gratefulness to our Shepherdess for guiding us.—*Janet Trevino-Elizarraraz, San Antonio*

—*Compiled by Anna Groff*

tied together the three stories.

"We are not an inconvenience or an accident," she said. "We are connected, and we are something beautiful, and there is reason for hope."

She also suggested that Mennonite women can serve as 'apostles to the Apostles,' as Mary Magdalene was for the disciples." Women can provide "another account and another witness" for our church leaders, Berry said.

On Feb. 22, the storytellers included Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, moderator of Mennonite Church USA; Janie Beck Kreider of Merry Lee Environmental Learning Center in Indiana; and Caitlin Michelle Desjardins, director of youth at a Presbyterian church in Cleveland, Ohio.

Soto Albrecht spoke about self-love. Beck Kreider spoke about love in light of sexual violation.

Desjardins shared her story of coming out as gay in her setting as a Mennonite seminary student, where she was mostly welcomed and supported, she said.

However, she experiences a lack of acceptance from her family and friends back home. For example, she regularly receives letters from family and friends begging her to leave her partner and give up her "homosexual lifestyle."

She hears responses, such as, "You're not living God's best for your life."

Desjardins said she realizes those individuals have witnessed few models of faithful, Christian LGBT people or welcoming congregations.

"I hope to call them to 'just love' yet still honor their faith journey," she said.

Desjardins' positive experience in her Mennonite setting changed when a church "publicly outed" her without her permission, she said, and the accepting tone shifted, even from some she had trusted. She sensed that she would be henceforth accepted only if she was "silently gay."

"However," Desjardins said, "institutions that are silent on issues of inclusion and are mute in the face of injustice can be far more damaging to LGBT and other minority individuals than those that outrightly exclude."

Julia Feder, of the University of Notre Dame (Ind.), was the theological responder. A "real love of others is rooted in a strong sense of self as related to God," Feder said.

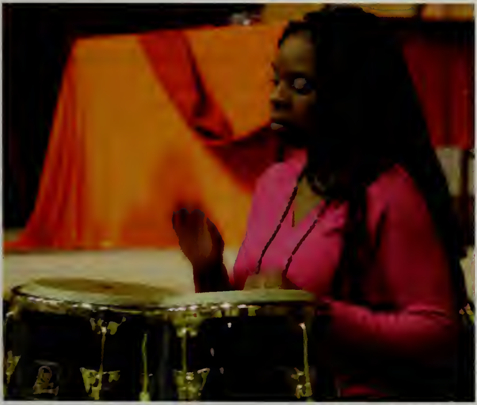
Hilary Scarsella, planner of the conference, named the LGBT issue as the elephant in the room. She also acknowledged the pain members of the LGBT community experience.

While she acknowledged the pain felt by all, their pain is "more accurately described as trauma as it criticizes who they are—their very being," she said.

Scarsella also encouraged the group and said that women's love is "womb-like" and "capable of turning the pains of labor into new life."

The workshops and paper presentations included a wide variety of topics, including motherhood, miscarriage, sexual abuse, oppression, racial identity, feminism, environmental issues, sexual ethics and images of God.

About 20 percent of the participants, planners and leaders were women of color, and a variety of ages were represented.—*Anna Groff*



Carol Roth

Chantelle Todman-Moore of Philadelphia, program coordinator at Mennonite Central Committee East Coast, accompanies the worship music at the conference.

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Letters express concern about conference decision

Leaders in Ohio, Indiana-Michigan and East Coast conferences send three letters

In February, at least three groups of conference leaders and pastors sent letters addressed to the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board (EB) regarding the LGBT community and Mennonite Church USA.

In general, these three letters registered concern and requested clarification on the EB's response to the Mountain States Conference's decision to license Theda Good, a lesbian pastor at First Mennonite Church in Denver.

Two letters came from some congregational leaders in Ohio Mennonite Conference and Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference. The third was from East Coast leaders that include Lancaster, Virginia, New York, Franklin and Franconia Mennonite conferences.

Fifty-two leaders signed the Ohio letter, dated Feb. 5. The letter calls on Ohio Conference leadership to "urge Mountain States to reconsider and reverse their decision." The 52 signatures of leaders represent 21 of the 77 congregations in Ohio Conference. The signatures represent both pastoral leaders and congregational lay leaders.

Some of the leaders have talked extensively about this letter with their congregations, and others have not, said Tom Kauffman, Ohio conference minister, on Feb. 27.

"We have also been in conversation with Mountain States and how we might be in conversation with them conference to conference," said Kauffman.

If Mountain States does not reconsider, the letter from some congregational leaders of Ohio Conference asks that the Constituency Leaders Council and EB suspend Mountain States Conference membership in Mennonite Church USA and bring a motion for the removal of the conference from membership in Mennonite Church USA at the delegate assembly during Kansas City 2015.

The letter also expresses concern regarding consequences of the Mountain States decision on the witness of Ohio Conference. "[This decision] becomes an obstacle for missions when persons in our communities hear about such actions and are led to misunderstand or misrepresent the beliefs and practices of our congregations. We are concerned that it may cause weaker members to stumble if we are not unified in our understanding of godly expressions of sexuality and human relationships," the Ohio letter states. "And when our members hear of not just other individuals, or even congregations, but of whole conferences that hold views contrary to our own, it becomes more and more difficult to promote a distinctly Anabaptist identity and understanding of Scripture."

The second letter, from Indiana-Michigan Conference leaders, is at http://transformationletter.blogspot.com.

The blog invited individuals to sign the letter by Feb. 10. Forty-six pastors and credentialed individuals signed it.

"We believe the ongoing dialogue over blessing same-sex relationships, credentialing pastors in same-sex relationships and the additional demands of LGBT advocacy groups is crippling our witness and mission to the world," states the Indiana-Michigan Conference letter. "There has been a dialogue over this issue for over 25 years in the Mennonite church, which has resulted in many congregations and people leaving Mennonite Church USA, and the dialogue has not drawn us together."

The letter also acknowledges that not everyone in Indiana-Michigan Conference agrees with the letter. "We do not seek to change or force our beliefs on other congregations or conferences," it states. "At the same time, we are committed to identifying with congregations, a conference and a denomination that unite us in a common witness to the transforming power of Jesus Christ."

The third letter, from East Coast conferences, dated Feb. 12, was made available to *The Mennonite*. It was signed by Clyde Kratz, executive conference minister of Virginia Mennonite Conference; Keith Weaver, moderator of Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference; Gene Miller, executive conference minister of New York Conference; Ertell Whigham, executive conference minister of Franconia Conference; and Allen Lehman, executive conference minister of Franklin Mennonite Conference.

"A number of pastors in each of our conferences have begun questioning their continued affiliation with Mennonite Church USA in light of these latest developments," says the East Coast letter.

These three letters were among many responses the EB received. As reported in the March issue, a Jan. 24 letter signed by 150 Mennonite pastors and others credentialed for ministry urged denominational leaders to "make space for congregations and pastors who welcome and bless LGBT Jesus followers."

According to Ervin Stutzman, executive director, the EB and staff received many responses from individuals, churches and conferences before the EB meeting Feb. 13-15 in Harrisonburg, Va. The EB discussed a few of the specific letters but spent the majority of the time discussing the "concerns and themes that were voiced in many letters," said Ervin Stutzman on Feb. 27.

He noted three themes: "One, deep concern about the decision that the Mountain States Conference had made and a plea for the Executive Board to sanction the conference; two, affirmation for the Mountain States action, with a plea for fuller LGBT inclusion in the church, and three, a call to unity in the midst of our differences," Stutzman said.—*Anna Groff*

Movement connects women theologians

Latin American women's movement helps women express gifts through ministry.

For more than 10 years, women have supported each other's ministry across Latin America through connections within the Movimiento de Teólogas Anabautistas de América Latina (Latin American Anabaptist Women Theologians Movement).

"These meetings have been such a blessing for us," says Zaraí Gonzalía, the executive administrator of the Seminario Bíblico Menonita de Colombia (Colombia Mennonite Biblical Seminary). Gonzalía is also the regional co-coordinator of the Andean Zone for the women's movement. "Friendships are established and strengthened within communities and throughout regions. These relationships are fundamental in encouraging us because we know we have other women who are walking with us in mission."

About 80 women from throughout the continent met Feb. 8-10. The theme for this year's continent-wide workshop was, "Toward a Holistic Renewal from the Word of God: Spirit, Mind and Body."

Linda Shelly, director for Latin America for Mennonite Mission Network, is an advisor to the Latin American women theologians and supports the movement by helping develop connections, funding relationships and plans.

"It was clear from the beginning that this was a 'movement,' the idea being that it's open to broad participation," said Shelly, in a 2013 reflection. "The MTAL encourages women to study theology, support each other in their ministries and help their churches understand God's call to both women and men."

The movement, with support from Mennonite World Conference and member churches in the North and South, highlights the gifts of women in ministry. Shelly said, "This is especially helpful in places where churches have traditionally emphasized the verses that speak against women's leadership in the church rather than emphasize the lives of women leaders included in the Bible."

Milka Rindzinski, a theologian from Uruguay who is an advisor for the women's movement, was denied ordination in the 1960s after she graduated from the Seminario Evangélico Menonita de Teología (Evangelical Mennonite Theology Seminary) in Montevideo.

As a student, church leaders had encouraged her to take on pastoral responsibilities like preaching, counseling and mentoring other believers. But after her ordination was denied, she found other ways to serve the church.

"In reality, a woman can still use all of her God-given gifts, even if she isn't ordained," said Rindzinski, in a blog post she wrote for the movement's blog. "But it can be frustrating to be discriminated against and unvalued. Nevertheless, the example from this movement spreads and makes the church review [its] beliefs. And now there are Anabaptist Mennonite churches in Latin America that are ordaining women pastors."

Linda Shelly

Ester Bornes, coordinator for the Southern Cone for the Latin American Anabaptist Women Theologians Movement, Milka Rindzinski, advisor for the movement, and Patricia Urueña, education coordinator for the movement, hug at the meeting in Guatemala City.

The movement started when Latin American women and the African women theologians met during the Mennonite World Conference assembly in Zimbabwe in 2003. The Latin American women were impressed by the African women and motivated to also organize women in their continent.

"I was inspired by their vision of liberation, which was not limited to merely a secular feminist view, but was one of liberation that came from the Bible, from Jesus," said Ofelia García, a pastor from Mexico.

García and Alix Lozano, who was then the director of the Mennonite Seminary in Colombia, took the initiative to organize a movement in Latin America. The group received a formal blessing from Mennonite World Conference, where MTAL is connected with the Faith and Life Commission.

Over the years, many women have worked hard to expand the movement. They define the word "theologian" to include the theological work that women do in all areas of church leadership. No degree is required to participate, but women are encouraged to study theology.

They also connect their events with regional church gatherings in order to increase participation.—*Sara Alvarez of Mennonite Mission Network*

Faith formers for children and youth

Mennonite Educators Conference seeks to be 'Open to the Unexpected.'

The Feb. 6-8 Mennonite Educators Conference (MEC) brought together nearly 500 pastors and educators in Leesburg, Va.

"It is an honor to be here, because every association I've had with Mennonites has been fun," said Kenda Creasy Dean, professor of youth, church and culture at Princeton (N.J.) Theological Seminary (PTS) and author of numerous books on youth and church, including *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church*. She gave the keynote address.

MEC is a biennial event sponsored by Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) and Mennonite Schools Council (MSC) to provide professional development and networking opportunities for Mennonite educators and children and youth leaders working with early childhood through 12th grade.

"As teachers you are in ministry," Creasy Dean said. "We want students to see themselves the way God sees them. … Most of the efforts made in faith formation aren't changing much about [youth]. What one does is perpetuating who one already is. [We should] want to crack open young people so they can discover who God wants them to be."

Mennonite educators worship at MEC in Leesburg, Va.

Creasy Dean went on to share the opportunity that teachers have to help young people discover who God wants them to be. She shared results of research done by PTS on teens' and young adults' reaction to faith. She explained that what she calls Moralistic Therapeutic Deism—God is there to help you feel good about yourself—"has no traction. It is not a durable faith. If this is all it is, why should we keep doing it?"

Creasy Dean's keynote address echoed the conference theme, "Open to the Unexpected," based on Ephesians 3:20-21.

"In this culture of video gaming, Kenda reminded us that the epic win is in Jesus Christ," said Elaine Moyer, senior director of MEA. "Kenda kept us open to the unexpecte as she shared with us new ways to look at things and reminded us of the opportunity we have as youth leaders and educators of Mennonite schools to open young people to the unexpected power of God."

Conference participants represented 31 Mennonite schools from the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, Albania and Colombia as well as 10 congregations and several church agencies.

In addition to the keynote sessions by Creasy Dean and Carlos Romero, executive director of MEA, worship, network sessions and workshops kept conference-goers busy. Network groups were designed for teachers and pastors to meet together with other professionals who work in the same subject area to encourage and learn from one another.

The two workshop session times covered a wide range o topics for Mennonite educators and youth workers: mental health, autism, using technology in the classroom, online learning, student collaboration, Sabbath and education, faith for a new generation, collaborative problem-solving and peacemaking. One workshop focused on the new accreditation partnership among MSC, MEA and AdvancED and one on the new online learning initiatives taking place through the work of MEA and MSC.—*Krista Allen of MEA*

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AMBS launches Center for Faith Formation and Culture

Plans are to focus on children and families, youth and young adults, and adults.

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind., is launching the Center for Faith Formation and Culture to help congregations, families and individuals not only nurture faith but also become aware of how their contexts shape their faith.

"This Center will keep our focus right where it belongs—on how we form communities of faith where life abundant can flourish from the early years on through the final years of life," says Sara Wenger Shenk, AMBS president.

The work of the Center will include offering resources and conducting research to help congregations read their cultural contexts and foster faith-building practices. It also will foster connections among others working at faith formation in Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA.

Andy Brubacher Kaethler, assistant professor of faith formation and culture at AMBS, will direct the work of the Center. Since 2004, Brubacher Kaethler has directed !Explore: A Theological Program for High School Youth, in which youth in grades 11 and 12 ask theological questions, test gifts for leadership and explore ministry.

Now his attention will expand to three categories: children and families, youth and young adults, and adults and seniors. However, Brubacher Kaethler emphasizes, "We really want this to be intergenerational. Faith formation doesn't happen in isolation at these life stages."

Each year, the center will focus on one of the three life stages. Initially, the offerings will be workshops linked to courses in the seminary's curriculum that deal with faith development at different times of life.

For 2014-15, the emphasis will be children and families. Rachel Miller Jacobs, AMBS assistant professor of congregational formation, will teach a semester course on faith formation in families, and Brubacher Kaethler is planning a workshop that will explore reading the Bible with children.

The workshop, while being part of the course, is intended for broader participation, including church leaders and families. He hopes to involve people working with Christian education curriculum and resources in children's literature at nearby Goshen (Ind.) College.

For the focus on youth and young adults, Brubacher Kaethler is aware of several ways in which the center may be a resource to the church. In the ministry of catechesis and preparation for baptism, Brubacher Kaethler wonders, "Is it time to consider something more robust like mentorship or apprenticeship?"

He also is looking at the experiences of youth and families new to North American cultures, along with the challenges their congregations face in fostering faith development.

For the year in which the focus is on adults and seniors, Brubacher Kaethler imagines some events or sessions being held at Greencroft, a retirement community in Goshen.

Occasionally he has been asked if AMBS will offer a program like !Explore for seniors. So as he anticipates concentrating on later stages of life, he will use that model to look for ways of encouraging and supporting people who have either long-standing or new questions about their faith.

As the center becomes more established, it may host pastors in residence for several weeks. They will have opportunities to research related topics, share in AMBS classes and contribute to developing resources. Broader sharing in print and digital formats will be done as the work of the center gains momentum.

AMBS has long provided spiritually mature pastors for congregations, workshops and seminars on spiritual formation, and print resources, such as the Anabaptist prayer book.

Wenger Shenk also says that with !Explore, "we are practiced in what the center is about—faith formation and cultural discernment among youth. We can adapt that for people at other stages of life as well."—*Mary Klassen of AMBS*

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Myers says 'the hair on your neck' should stand up

Federal official calls for church-state partnership in disaster response.

In disasters, the church and the state need to work closely together," said David Myers, director of the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships at the Department of Homeland Security, Feb. 8 in his address to Mennonite Disaster Service's (MDS) Annual All-Unit Meeting in Bakersfield, Calif.

"That statement should make the hair on the back of your neck stand up," added Myers, who serves as a senior advisor to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) director Craig Fugate.

The meeting brought together some 250 MDS leaders and volunteers from throughout the United States and Canada.

In his formal remarks and in an interview, Myers reflected on the value as well as the hazards of church and government working together.

An ordained Mennonite minister, Myers is well-aware of the tension that a church-government partnership evokes. He cited the story of the Swiss Anabaptists' defiance of the state church control in 1525 as the "artesian well" that eventually grew into "the great and beautiful river that separates the church and the state in this country."

David Myers

His own role as a Mennonite working in government makes for regular encounters with the tension in church-state relations. "There hasn't been a day in almost five years that I haven't at least in some way had to negotiate the separation of church and state. That's hard for a Mennonite to do," he said.

But, he contended, MDS must navigate that tension because the needs of communities in times of disaster require the complementary resources the partnership provides.

While government agencies bring financial resources, rebuilding and fostering resilience in communities requires the human presence that voluntary organizations like MDS bring. "Humans need to feel connected, attached to others, especially when your world has been upended," he said.

Myers pointed to the government's response to the 2009 floods in Alaska, where FEMA purchased building materials in bulk for eligible survivors and helped fund travel for expert volunteer labor from MDS and other Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOADs). "FEMA could have brought contractors in to do [the rebuilding] but they would not have built the relationships. And it saved the government money."

VOADs are a key component in FEMA's recently established doctrine of "Whole Community," said Myers. "Whole Community" involves many partners, from businesses and public institutions to faith communities and nonprofit organ zations. All are invited to the table as communities prepare for, respond to and rebuild after a disaster.

According to Myers, MDS's long-term commitment to the communities where they serve makes them an especially effective partner in the rebuilding phase.

"MDS's style is to come in and stay put. When the hous is finished it's not just the house but lives that have been touched. That's what the government wants t happen—to have communities put back together to a new normal—and it's something that government cannot do and should not eve try to do.

"A shovel, a hammer, a saw, as importan as they are to repair the physical, without the heart you infuse in your work because of your faith, there would be no true healing, no true resilience," he told the MDS audience.

But Myers also cautioned: "There may be issue that brings the government and faith-based groups into more intense strategically planned and necessary relationship than do dis asters. And it is for this reason that great care must be take by the government and faith-based groups like MDS to be intentional and careful about those relationships.

"Both [government and VOADs] can say 'we need you' but they can say in equal measure 'you are not the boss of me.' "

President George W. Bush established the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships in 2001. In 2009, President Barak Obama appointed Myers director of the Office's Center embedded in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Myers has been impressed with the freedom he and the Center have been given in relating to faith-based group He credits his bosses, FEMA director Craig Fugate and White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships director Melissa Rogers for allowing that freedom to grow over the years as they have seen the results of the Center's efforts.

Myers' role with FEMA has given him a unique view int how the agency works with partners like MDS. FEMA Director Craig Fugate has a high appreciation and respect for VOADs as partners, said Myers. "I have been amazed at th relationship between FEMA and the faith-based VOAD groups. The fact that they can work so close together without getting messed up in the [First Amendment] establishment clause is remarkable."—*Kathy Heinrichs Wiest for Meetinghouse, a consortium of Anabaptist publications*

Speaker warns of Christian Zionism

Palestinian Christian challenges North American Anabaptists

Palestinian Christian Salim Munayer shared about his work as a peacemaker in the Middle East and his vision for how North American Anabaptists could be involved in the region with staff from Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM), Lancaster Mennonite Conference (LMC) and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) at a Feb. 24 joint chapel service on EMM's campus in Salunga, Pa.

David Shenk, EMM global consultant who met Munayer and his wife, Kay, in a restaurant in Jerusalem several years ago, said that he and his wife, Grace, were "deeply touched as we heard of their vision and their commitment to being people who are bringing a message of reconciliation in a very divided world."

Munayer, son of a Christian family with a 2,000-year history in Palestine, saw Jesus-style response to mistreatment modeled by his father, Jacob. During the establishment of the nation of Israel in 1948, Jacob's house and property were seized by Israeli soldiers. He chose not to retaliate but to forgive and to work for peace.

In high school, Munayer went to a Bible study where Israeli and Arab Christians met to study Scripture together. He found a way through the conflict around him through faith in Jesus. In university, he mentored Israeli Christians and developed a strong theology of reconciliation.

Munayer challenged North American Anabaptists to be aware of the dangers of Zionism.

"Christian Zionist theology slowly slips from 'bringing the gospel to the Jewish people' to a theology that says the role of the church is to stand with the Jewish people and the state of Israel because there is a certain plan for the end times," said Munayer.

"In that process, you'll find yourself protecting, defending a political state and that leads into violence. This is the biggest problem I have with Christian Zionism—in its many forms, it leads Christians to endorse violence, and in the end they don't hear the message of reconciliation and peace."

Munayer encouraged North American Anabaptists to actively work for peace in the Middle East, both through sending Mennonite peacemakers to the region and by responding to narratives of Christian Zionism that are prevalent in the United States. He suggested that if North American Anabaptists are not speaking up about the dangers of Zionism, they are complicit in condoning it.

Munayer also made a strong claim for a theology of the cross. "Every theology is a community endeavor. That endeavor happens best when we all come to the foot of the cross. Without the cross of Jesus we cannot have a proper theology because the cross is our ultimate reality; it's absolute," said Munayer. "So if you have a theology of justice, peace, end times or land that becomes more important than the cross of Jesus, you [will] find yourself in violence."

Munayer has been actively working for reconciliation in the Middle East for many years. In 1990, Munayer and Pastor Evan Thomas called together Israeli and Palestinian congregational leaders to found Musalaha Reconciliation Ministry.

The organization's purpose is to promote reconciliation between local believers based on the teachings and life of Jesus and to build bridges between the greater Jewish and Muslim communities of Israeli and Palestinian society.

One of Musalaha's ministries is leading groups of Israelis and Palestinians into the desert to share a retreat together. "We address the imbalance of power in the desert," said Munayer. "In the desert, you discover who God is in your enemy."

Staff from the three agencies represented at the joint chapel service affirmed Munayer's message. "We can often view peace as a passive thing, but I hear you encouraging us to make peace an active pursuit," said LMC moderator Keith Weaver.—*Chris Fretz of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

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Dialogue considers baptism, grace and sin

Mennonites, Catholics and Lutherans hold second dialogue on baptism.

I continue to be inspired by the mutuality of our work,” said John Rempel of Toronto, one of the Mennonite participants in the second meeting of the Trilateral (Catholic, Lutheran, Mennonite) Dialogue Commission on Baptism, held Jan. 26-31 in Strasbourg, France.

The general topic of the dialogue, which is to extend over four years, is “Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church.” The theme for this year was “Baptism: God’s Grace in Christ and Human Sin.”

“Everyone is treated equally even though we are by far the smallest confession,” said Rempel. “We are all trying to rethink the issues in terms of the 21st century, not only the 16th century.”

He commented further: “I find myself grappling especially with two aspects of this year’s meeting, discovering how important sacraments are to Lutherans and Catholics as expressions of God’s initiative: God is mysteriously at work by means of prayer and water, whether we respond to it or not. Yet I can’t understand God’s initiative in the New Testament without the human response to grace.”

He added: “At the same time, our partners fear that we put so much weight on the human decision to believe that God’s initiative is pushed to the background. The participants are aware that only through the work of the Holy Spirit will this dialogue lead us closer to the mind of Christ.”

Mennonite participants who presented papers on this year’s theme were Alfred Neufeld of Paraguay and Fernando Enns of Germany. Luis Augusto Castro Quiroga of Colombia and Gregory Fairbanks of the United States and the Vatican presented papers from a Catholic perspective. And Friederike Nüssel of Germany presented a paper from a Lutheran perspective.

According to a joint release, the commission also continued to study the baptismal rites of each participating Christian tradition, with special attention in this meeting to the Lutheran tradition, particularly regarding the contextualization of baptismal rites in the African region. The commission began its working days with prayers and joint reflections on biblical texts relating to baptism.

“It is always surprising to me,” said Fernando Enns, “how much we learn about ourselves when we are asked to explain our theological convictions to others. During this meeting, the challenge was to lay out the Mennonite understanding of sin (original sin, actual sin, free will) and salvation. We referred to [the] Scriptures, Anabaptist writings, Mennonite confessions and personal and congregational experiences. To do this in the critical presence of the other shows immediately at which points those rationalities are not as obvious as they seem to ourselves.”

He added: “This seems to be true as well for the Lutheran and Catholic dialogue partners. Their voices are as varied as our Mennonite ones are. And every now and then we hear sentences such as, ‘We should not limit God’s ability to heal and to save to our sacramental systems.’ To me, this quote speaks about the cautious and humble approach to doing theology together—in ecumenical fellowship—during our encounters in this trilateral dialogue.”

The Lutheran World Federation hosted the meeting, which took place at the Institute for Ecumenical Research.

Other Mennonite participants included Rebecca Osiro of Kenya and Larry Miller of France.

The third meeting of the trilateral commission will take place in February 2015 in the Netherlands, hosted by Mennonite World Conference, and discuss the theme “Baptism: Communicating Grace and Faith.” A fourth meeting is anticipated in 2016, after which the commission is expected to submit its final report to the Lutheran World Federation, the Mennonite World Conference and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.—*Mennonite World Conference*

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Students draft 'Shenandoah Confession'

Intercollegiate Peace Fellowship models draft on the Schleitheim Confession.

Students from seven Anabaptist colleges wrapped up a three-day Intercollegiate Peace Fellowship Conference Jan. 31-Feb. 2 at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va., by deciding to issue the Shenandoah Confession, drafted in the style and spirit of the Schleitheim Confession of 1527.

Keynote speaker Lisa Schirch, an EMU professor internationally known for her peacebuilding work, asked the 100 conference participants to craft a confession of their faith, informed by 500 years of peacemaking experience.

The statement reached fruition on Feb. 24, exactly 487 years from the day the Schleitheim Confession was issued.

The original document represented "a watershed articulation of certain Anabaptist distinctives," wrote C. Arnold Snyder, in the "Schleitheim Confession" entry of the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online.

The Shenandoah Confession (see box) encompasses themes of love and compassion as well as calls to radical nonviolent action.

"It heavily stresses the peace principles that set the Anabaptists apart from many other faith streams," says EMU Bible and religion professor Nancy Heisey, adding that it was "drafted in group process and finalized by a student-led committee."

The document follows in the tradition of "speaking boldly" as part of the "priesthood of all believers," says senior Evan Knappenberger. He led the process through a half-dozen drafts, working with seniors Jacob Landis, Aaron Erb, Christine Baer and Krista Nyce. (Baer and Nyce also organized the conference). Knappenberger says Heisey, Schirch and other EMU faculty members significantly contributed to the process.

The Shenandoah Confession consists of 11 articles comprising 1,668 words. EMU Bible and religion professor Peter Dula calls its language "robustly theological." (See the full confession at www.themennonite.org.)

"The same spirit of radical community still hangs in the air, waiting for the right moment to spark something new," says Knappenberger.

The Intercollegiate Peace Fellowship of Mennonite and Affiliated Colleges aims to "promote the cause of biblical nonresistance by providing various channels for sharing ideas among the college peace groups," according to its 1953 constitution. Its annual conference rotates among host institutions.—*Bonnie Price Lofton of Eastern Mennonite Missions*

The eleven articles of confession

1. Confession of faith in Christ as the foundation of peace.
2. Love as the root of all things.
3. The call of the Spirit of God to all for radical pacifist action.
4. Acceptance of the truth of the full humanity of all God's children.
5. Inclusion as the guiding principle of action within the Spirit.
6. Accountability of historical wrongs, especially colonialisms.
7. An abiding desire to participate in resilient and just economies.
8. The full and unflinching engagement of creative faculties of believers in service of peace.
9. Embrace of lives of radical simplicity following the truth of God's peace on Earth.
10. Commitment to deep listening and dialogue as the prophetic intention of Christian pacifism.
11. Recognition of failures and continued recommitment to our principles within community.

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Making Pinecraft a better place to live

Goshen College students create plan for Florida Amish community.

Photo provided

From left, Niles Graber Miller, Hans Weaver and Emma Ruth are creating a master plan for the Amish community of Pinecraft in Sarasota, Fla.

It started as a campground for Amish visiting Sarasota, Fla., in the 1920s. Now, the community of Pinecraft has grown into a small village with paved streets, houses, churches, restaurants and a post office. Each winter, as many as 3,000 Amish people from "up north" trade in their buggies for three-wheeled tricycles and join the small, year-round Amish population in Pinecraft.

Because of the spontaneous nature of Pinecraft's growth, there are concerns about its safety, building permits, land use and ordinance codes. With the help of two Goshen (Ind.) College students and a recent graduate, these concerns are finally being addressed.

The team is working with Sarasota County officials, the Pinecraft board and other citizens to develop a new plan that both preserves and enhances the Pinecraft community's cultural heritage for future generations.

The team is made up of Niles Graber Miller, a senior business major from Goshen, Emma Ruth, a senior sociology major and global economics minor from Harleysville, Pa., and Hans Weaver, a 2013 Goshen graduate with a degree in business and minor in global economics. Norm Kauffmann, former Goshen College dean of students and recently retired city manager in Shipshewana, Ind., is overseeing the project.

"It's been really exciting for us to be immersed in the culture here as we work on such a critical project for this Amish/Mennonite community," Ruth says. "Not only will w help meet the needs of community members right now, we have also been given the opportunity to plan for the future and it will be really rewarding to see the results of our work years down the road."

Pinecraft covers less than a square mile on the eastern edge of Sarasota and is located off of a four-lane highway tha presents a safety concern for residents, an issue raised by many community members. It also continues to expand northward into a neighborhood across nearby Phillipi Creek, which may mean building a bridge to connect the community

"We're looking at all sorts of things," Ruth says. "Safety and transportation guidelines, building zoning and setbacks, commercial industries and park maintenance."

Among the ideas to improve safety are to introduce crosswalks, speed bumps and streetlights.

Other issues are more practical, such as regulations for renting rooms and bicycles, bringing in bus routes and adding amenities to the park. The team meets regularly wit community stakeholders to figure out how to carry out thes changes.

"Essentially what we are doing is serving as a link between the Pinecraft board, made up of property and busines owners, as well as some who are just influential in the community, and Sarasota County," Ruth says. "As the board comes up with concerns that they have for this community, as well as hopes and plans for the future, we are helping to make those things feasible."

The goal is to have a master plan in place by the time the students return to Goshen at the end of the semester. According to the planning commission, the master plan create by the Goshen students could serve as a template for other communities throughout Sarasota and beyond.

"The written plan will document and organize the needs and wants of both Pinecraft and the county of Sarasota," Graber Miller says. "Being able to accurately communicate the needs of the Pinecraft community will pave the way for the preservation of this community."

"We've felt wholeheartedly welcomed by this community and are enjoying the opportunities we have to become involved in daily life within the neighborhood," Ruth says. "Hans and Niles are learning to golf and I'm waiting to be invited to a quilting circle. We have experienced Amish church, an auction and numerous visits to homes."—*Brian Yoder Schlabach of Goshen College*

Exploring ways to support peace in Palestine and Israel

Mennonite Central Committee U.S. to launch monthly gatherings this year

To encourage the pursuit of peace in Palestine and Israel, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) U.S. will launch monthly gatherings in the United States this year for people who want to explore their beliefs, concerns and understanding of this conflict.

"The main idea and core value of the 'Conversations for Peace in Palestine and Israel' initiative is our strong belief that Christ's love is available for all people, all the time, and it is not assigned exclusively to a particular people or group," says J. Ron Byler, executive director of MCC U.S. "Focusing this effort on the conflict in Palestine and Israel gives participants an opportunity to explore how Christ's love leads us to respond to this conflict."

J. Daryl Byler, former MCC representative with Cindy Lehman Byler, his wife, in Palestine and Israel, Iran, Iraq and Jordan, will facilitate the monthly conversations with churches and groups who invite him. Byler is now executive director for Eastern Mennonite University's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding in Harrisonburg, Va.

Topics of conversation will include:

- paths to peace for everyone in the region
- theological understandings about the state of Israel
- fundamental justice issues in the region
- stories of Palestinians, including Palestinian Christians.

"Agreeing on ways to love and encourage peace in the context of the Middle East is a challenge for Christians in the United States, including MCC supporters, because many have different theological perspectives about the modern-day state of Israel," Daryl Byler says. "As we explore these topics together, I hope our understanding of others' perspectives and the needs of Palestinians and Israelis will grow."

In addition, MCC U.S. is working closely with Mennonite Church USA on learning tours for church leaders to Palestine and Israel during the next five years and welcomes the opportunity to develop similar plans with other supporting denominations.

Participants will visit historical sites and observe how the Palestinian-Israeli conflict affects the people who live there today. Visits with MCC partners—Palestinian and Jewish organizations that work for peace and justice—will challenge participants to consider what role they play in the conflict and its resolution.

> Focusing this effort on the conflict in Palestine and Israel gives participants an opportunity to explore how Christ's love leads us to respond to this conflict.

In addition, MCC continues its work in the region, where it has been a partner with local organizations for more than 60 years, and in the United States to provide ways for Christians to take action to support peace.

Ultimately, MCC hopes that as more people explore and understand this situation, Ron Byler says, they will be inspired to act for peace through such things as prayer, service, examining their investments or Christian advocacy with the U.S. government.

For more information about participating in "Conversations for Peace" or learning tours, contact susanwenger@mcc.org, 717-859-1151.—*Linda Espenshade of MCC*

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Hearing from the Christians in Syria

U.S. policy in Syria might best be described as 'magical thinking.'

Courtyard of the Umayyad Mosque. Photo by Mel Lehman

The bombing at the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church in Damascus that killed four people last summer struck a particularly sensitive nerve with me. It occurred just a few blocks from old St. Ananias' church, an important place in my spiritual life.

On each of my several trips to Syria in recent years, before the current madness began, I made a pilgrimage to the St. Ananias church in Old Damascus, where the Apostle Paul is believed to have recovered his sight. I would go through St. Thomas' gate—Bab Touma—into the old city, then left through a maze of ancient cobblestone streets to Straight Street, left again through a vine-covered alleyway to the old church and down a flight of stone stairs to the underground room where Paul began to fully understand the vision he had received on the road to Damascus.

I remember well the cool stillness of that ancient shrine, the quiet delight of being in the same place where something profoundly wonderful had once happened. It was here that Paul, who had come from Jerusalem on the road to Damascus, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," came to realize that love, not violence, was the answer.

Walking down St. Ananias' old cellar stairs was for me like physically walking into a prayer—descending step by step from the troubled temporal world we know on the surface of daily life down deeper toward the ultimate eterna ground of being from which we come.

> Over the centuries, Christians in the Middle East have been an honored part of the Middle East mosaic of religions an have sometimes been called 'Flowers in the Garden of Islam.'

Sometimes I had company. Once a group of pious Germans were there, singing a hymn, but more often I was alone or with just with one other pilgrim. During my last visit, in December 2011, as violence was creeping from the outer provinces of Syria toward Damascus, I shared the

Turkey
Syria
Mediterranean Sea
Lebanon
Damascus
Israel
Iraq
Palestinian Territories
Jordan
Saudi Arabia

room with a Christian woman who was there when I arrived and was still there, lost in prayer, when I left.

Sadly, her prayers and the prayers of millions of other Christian and Muslim Syrians have not yet been answered. Now, instead of Syria being associated with some of the most sublime spiritual experiences we mortals can know, the war has produced some of the most horrific human savagery imaginable. Now the flow of traffic is not on the road to Damascus but from Damascus, with the violence creating some 6 million internally displaced Syrians and 2.5 million refugees who have fled the country. A country that had justifiably taken pride in its religious tolerance has become the place of the most vicious sectarian bloodletting and raw power plays.

Tragically, instead of stanching that flow of blood, the United States is now helping increase its flow. After more than a decade of disastrous wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, we still stubbornly cling to the belief that war—if we can just figure out how to dial up the correct level of violence and get it right the next time around—will solve the problems of the Middle East and protect our interests. Our policy in Syria might best be described as "magical thinking."

It is not altogether clear what we are sending or exactly to whom we are sending it, but clearly the United States is providing substantial support to a ragtag group of rebels about whom we know little, and much of what little we know is reprehensible. And while the United States claims to be offering only nonlethal aid to the "moderates," it is now clear that the overall effect of the aid is also helping the radical extremist Al Qaedas. And it is by now clear that our decision to aid these rebels is endangering the Christians of Syria.

This is very much unlike the peaceful co-existence Christians have enjoyed for centuries with Muslims in Syria, a co-existence I repeatedly saw firsthand. Over the centuries, Christians in the Middle East have been an honored part of the Middle East mosaic of religions and indeed have sometimes been called "Flowers in the Garden of Islam." Nowhere was that more true than in Syria.

During my visits to Syria I had the honor of meeting with three Syrian imams. All of them emphasized their commitment to interfaith cooperation. My Syrian Christian friends told me the same thing: Relations between Christians and Muslims were good. During one of my visits to Damascus one December, I distinctly remember the large number of Christmas lights displayed in Christian neighborhoods and was told that Christmas sermons were broadcast on national media.

But the arrival of extremist foreign rebels—the very rebels we are now indirectly aiding—has brought increasing reports of previously unheard-of attacks on Christians. Religious extremist rebels have attacked Christian towns, including Maaloula, one of the few places left where Aramaic, the ancient language of Jesus, is still spoken. A headline in the *National Catholic Reporter* (July 19, 2013) reported that a "'Shadow War' targets Christians in Syria."

An article based on Vatican sources in the June 27, 2013, *Catholic New York*, reported that rebels attacked a Franciscan convent in northern Syria, killing a Syrian priest. Franciscan Father Pierbattista Pizzaballa, head of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, asked the faithful "to pray that this folly ends soon and that no more weapons are sent to Syria because that would only prolong this absurd civil war. … The ones paying the price are the poor, the small and the least, including the Christians."

It is abundantly clear that the viciousness and savagery of the war extends to both sides. The Syrian government will apparently stop at nothing to defeat its opponents.

But it is abundantly clear that the viciousness and savagery of the war extends to both sides. The Syrian government will apparently stop at nothing to defeat its opponents. There was cautious hope as recently as four years ago that the Assad regime, with the death of the iron-fisted father Hafez and the son Bashar in charge, would evolve into a more modern, liberal and democratic country. President Bashar al-Assad, after all, did not set out to rule Syria. His chosen career was as a member of a healing profession. He was training as an eye doctor in London until an automobile crash killed his older brother, the heir apparent, and Bashar returned home.

But all those cautious hopes have been crushed by the horrific events of the past three years. The brutal tactics of

Christmas trees in Damascus. Photo by Mel Lehman

the Assad regime were evident from the first days of the uprising, when a group of boys who had written some graffiti critical of the government were rounded up and tortured for their "crime."

Indeed torture has become a hallmark of the Assad regime, along with bombing civilian neighborhoods, and charges have been made of chemical weapons and starvation as war tactics. Simply reading a list of the widely documented charges against the Syrian government in its conduct of the war turns one's stomach.

The one thing all observers of the crisis in Syria agree on is that there are no good options. President Bashar al-Assad has done some terrible things—no one is denying that. But the catastrophe that has befallen the Syrian people is much, much worse. At this point, the Syrian people simply want the agony to stop.

One of my Syrian Christian friends is a nun I'll call "Maria." The last time I saw her was in the early stages of the current civil war. She looked me in the eye and gave me a firm farewell instruction: "Tell Hillary Clinton [then Secretary of State] to not use violence."

I received a personal email from Maria not long ago. She told me that one of her fellow nuns, whom I'd also gotten to know, had been forced to flee Syria. "Pray for us," Maria wrote, "and if you have the opportunity to talk to the American government, tell them to stop giving money to the militias who are killing the innocents and terrorizing all the minorities of Syria. Dear Mr. Mel, people who give their money for killing are guilty of a crime against humanity."

American Muslims, we are beginning to recognize, understand themselves to be a vital part of the worldwide umma or global Islamic community, and the American Jewish community has long been intimately connected with their fellow Jews in Israel. But American Christians have not only ignored the voices of Maria and other Middle East Christians; they hardly even know they exist. American Christians have been remarkably uncurious about Arab Christians—in fact, we've often been downright intellectually lazy.

We would do well to listen to what Middle East Christian are saying to us and—agree or disagree—at least give them a fair hearing and engage in a discussion. We have a key partner in our search for peace, eager to help us, but we don't even know they exist. If we took the time to listen, w would find that Middle East Christians, like our mutual spir tual ancestor Paul, are trying to tell us that love, not violence, is the answer.—*Mel Lehman has traveled to Syria numerous times in his humanitarian work with Iraqi refugee artists. He directs Common Humanity, a nonprofit organization that seeks to build friendship, understanding and respect between the United States and the Arab and Muslim world. H is a deacon at Manhattan (N.Y.) Mennonite Fellowship.*

A complex religious mosaic

The Christians of Syria are part of a complex religious mosaic that characterizes their country and indeed the whole Middle East. One of the important aspects of the Syrian conflict relates to the Shi'a/Sunni split in the Muslim world. While the theological issues are obviously different, it may be compared with the Catholic/Protestant split in Western Christianity.

For the past several decades the Assad family has been in control of Syria. The Assads and their allies are part of a breakaway sect known as Alawite. As a minority, they have treated their fellow minorities well, including the Christians. The part of Islam the Alawites broke away from centuries ago was the Shi'a. Again, the theological issues are unrelated, but we may think of the Mormons in this country breaking away from the Protestant part of Christianity as something like the Alawites braking away from the Shi'a. Years later, just as Mormons resonate more closely with Protestants than Catholics, so the Alawites find natural alliance with the Shi'a rather than the Sunni.

The bulwark of economic and military strength in the Shi'a world is Iran, so in times of distress, Syria receives support from Iran. In recent years, Israel has identified Iran as a threat to its existence. This threat has been greatly overblown—any attack by Iran on Israel would become suicidal for Iran, since Israel would immediately launch a massive counterattack. But since the United States largely follows Israel's reading of the situation in the Middle East, the United States has come to see Iran as our enemy and also a part of why we have come to see Iran's ally, Syria, as our enemy as well. This puts the Christians of Syria on the other side across the great split between the Shi'a and Sunnis from U.S. Christians.—*Mel Lehman*

Career starts with Service Adventure

Jill Swiers Baker finds her vocation in social work after her voluntary service.

Jill Swiers Baker and husband, Ben Baker, with their sons Nolan and Jakoby

The clients gathered just outside the courtroom. It was their last chance to settle the case with a trained mediator before facing a judge. The mediator was 2003 Service Adventure participant Jill Swiers Baker.

Swiers Baker joined Service Adventure after she graduated from Hesston (Kan.) College. She wanted practical job experience, excitement, and a way to live out her faith. Service Adventure gave Swiers Baker just that. For the next 10 months, she joined a houseful of participants in Albany, Ore., where each person served in the community.

In her first two years of college, Swiers Baker had pursued several different career paths. But social work had been calling her. Working closely with Service Adventure personnel to find a good placement, she served at Linn Benton Mediation Services (LBMS), a small, nonprofit conflict resolution center in Albany.

Swiers Baker was an administrative assistant. When she showed initiative, the three-person office gave her the responsibility she craved. After she showed interest in counseling, LBMS pulled out all the stops. "They went crazy investing in me," Swiers Baker says. She attended basic mediation instruction and training for small claims court. "Any opportunity for continuing education, they made it possible for me to go."

After her trainings, Swiers Baker was able to mediate more with clients. Once a week, she mediated in a small-claims court. This gave clients a final opportunity to work out their issues before settling their cases with a judge.

Occasionally, Swiers Baker observed conflict management training in high schools. This allowed her to discern her vocation and shape her future career. After her Service Adventure experience, Swiers Baker completed her bachelor's degree in social work and returned to LBMS.

"Serving at LBMS provided Jill the space to actually get her hands dirty in the world of social work and mediation and ended up confirming for her a direction to continue on," says Susan Nisly, director of Service Adventure.

Currently, Swiers Baker is a school counselor for 670 students at Talmadge Middle School in Independence, Ore., near Albany.

While she works part-time as a school counselor, she and her husband, Ben Baker, are Service Adventure leaders for the Albany Service Adventure house. For years they dreamed about the possibility. In 2013, their dream became a reality.

In her experience, Jill Swiers Baker especially appreciated the program's emphasis on simple living, and she wanted their two young boys to learn to enjoy the simple things in life.

"There's no other place on earth that you can get such a rich experience where you can serve, gain valuable job skills, grow in your faith," says Swiers Baker.—*Kelsey Hochstetler of Mennonite Mission Network*

Investment Officer

Everence is seeking an Investment Officer to provide development, oversight and support of asset management delivery for the Everence investment platform. Position is located in the Goshen, Ind., office. Significant focus includes presentation, sales-oriented interaction and performance reporting with clients. Qualified applicants will possess an undergraduate degree in business or related field with a minimum of 5 years of significant experience in investment management and/or sales; strong sales and service orientation; excellent presentation and verbal skills; Series 65 license and AIF designation must be earned upon hiring.

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Everence

CALENDAR

Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church will host **Re-PLACING Ourselves, Becoming Watershed Discipleship Communities**, a discussion on earth justice in theology and practice on April 4-6. Keynote speakers will be Ched Meyers and Elaine Enns of Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries, Oak View, Calif.

WORKERS

Green, Shawn, was licensed for overseas mission work in Italy with Virginia Mennonite Missions, at New Beginnings Church, Harrisonburg, Va., on March 2.

Lorenzana, Marvin, was licensed for ministry with El Camino Discipular, a church plant in Harrisonburg, Va., at Mt. Clinton Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, on Jan. 19.

Merwarth, Jonathan, was licensed as elder of Maranatha Family Christian Fellowship, Nazareth, Pa., on Jan. 26.

Mwangi, Samuel, was licensed as lead pastor of Carpenter Community Church, Talmage, Pa., on Feb. 16.

OBITUARIES

Baer, Joseph F., 88, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 16. Spouse: Catherine Neuhauser Baer (deceased). Parents: Isaac and Laura Fuss Baer. Children: Joseph, David, Twila R. Baer; four grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 22 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Bergey, Grace S., 92, Hatfield, Pa., died Jan. 20. Parents: Horace L. and Esther Souder Bergey. Funeral: Jan. 25 at Souderton Mennonite Homes, Souderton, Pa.

Boyer, Claude F., 84, Bluffton, Ohio, died Dec. 17. Spouse: Mary Maust Boyer. Parents: Marcus and Reda Meck Boyer. Children: Mark, Elaine Margo; two grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 1 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

Braun, Helen, 85, Altona, Manitoba, died March 6. Parents: Bernhard and Agatha Neufeld Braun. Funeral: March 11 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

Brubacher, Donald J., 87, Hesston, Kan., died Feb. 2. Spouse: Margaret M. Wedel Brubacher. Parents: August and Clara Hirschler Brubacher. Children: Bindy Roth, Don, Dale; seven grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 6 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Dailey, James L., 86, Bluffton, Ohio, died Feb. 20. Spouse: Joan Burkholder Dailey. Parents: Dwight and Ollie Clouser Dailey. Children: John, Dan, Beth Diamond; 10 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 24 at Chiles and Sons Laman Funeral Home, Bluffton.

Eash, R. Duane, 75, Archbold, Ohio, died Feb. 17, of cancer. Spouse: Mary Alice Sauder Eash. Parents: Robert and Edna Blough Eash. Children: Keith, Beverly Lott, Denise Alexander, Lonnie, Jason; nine grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 24 at Tedrow Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Fisher, Margaret Martin, 61, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 23, of malignant mesothelioma. Spouse: James Fisher. Parents: Philip and Leah Rudy Martin. Children: Melissa Renee Fisher Fast, Matthew James Fisher; two grandchildren. Funeral: March 1 at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Goering, Lowell Jay, 75, Hesston, Kan died Feb. 3. Spouse: Judy A. Schmidt Goering. Parents: Paul P. and Lydia Kaufman Goering. Children: Greg, Sheryl Goering; five grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 8 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Kaufman, Melvin R., 88, Goshen, Ind., died Jan. 27. Spouse: Lois Marie Whitehead Kaufman. Parents: Calvin and Margaret Shetler Kaufman. Children: Charles, Gail Brumbaugh, Donald; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 1 at North Goshen Mennonite Churc Goshen.

King, Glen E., 61, Dalton, Ohio, died Feb 1, following a short period of declining health. Spouse: Judy Culp King. Parents: Eldon and Dorothy Miller King. Children: Brandon King, Danae King, Jordan King; one grandchild. Funeral: Feb. 5 at Orrville Mennonite Church, Orrville, Ohio.

Kingsley, Velma Katherine Emmert, 97, Bluffton, Ohio, died Dec. 20, 2013. Spouse: Leonard Kinsgsley (deceased). Parents: John and Grace Plank Emmert. Children: Phillip, Keith, Karl, Sue Ellen Kingsle Kinzel, Mitchell, Jane Steinmetz, Matthew Frederick; 20 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren. Memorial service: March 8 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

Leatherman, Margaret Grace Yothers, 90, Souderton, Pa., died Feb. 23 Spouse: Howard Leatherman (deceased). Parents: Isaac Erwin Yothers and Nora E. Yothers. Children: Bruce, Daniel, Richard, John, Dean, Duane, Margaret Troyer, Mary Derstine, Joanne Ruth, Geraldine Schmidt 24 grandchildren; 49 great-grandchildren Funeral: Feb. 28 at Deep Run Mennonite Church East, Perkasie, Pa.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Mann, Helen C. Ebersole, 104, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 25. Spouse: Clifford E. Mann (deceased). Parents: Edwin and Mary Bennett Ebersole. Children: Lois Eberly, Margaret Steiner, John Mann, Robert James Mann, Larry Hesed; 12 grandchildren; 27 great-grandchildren; five great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 28 at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Miller, Kenneth L., 85, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 2, of cancer. Spouse: Sally Gall Miller. Parents: Jacob B. and Mattie Yoder Miller. Children: Bruce, Ed; six grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 7 at Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Moyer, Stella H. Freed, 97, Souderton, Pa., died Feb. 21. Spouse: Walter B. Moyer (deceased). Parents: Oswin H. and Mary Ann Hackman Freed. Children: Mildred Trauger, Earl F.; six grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: Feb. 27 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

Moyer, Verna A., 86, Souderton, Pa., died March 6. Parents: David D. and Mary Lizzie Allebach Moyer. Funeral: March 13 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Smith, Melinda Jost, 91, Hatfield, Pa., died Jan. 19. Spouse: Wilmer E. Smith (deceased). Spouse: Elmo R. Hooley (deceased). Parents: John R. and Helene Baerg Jost. Children: Ruth Hooley Suter, Rosemary Hooley Lambright, Renee Hooley Munshi; four grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 16 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Snapp, Elizabeth Faire Stucky, 88, Denver, Colo., died Feb. 5, of Arteriosclerosis Cardiovascular Disease. Spouse: Donald McKenzie Snapp (deceased). Parents: Bernard Joseph and Emma Graber Stucky. Children: Laura Snapp, Jeffry. Funeral: Feb. 16 at Washington Park United Church of Christ, Denver.

Sowell, Luessie Barbara Mitchell, 80, Winston-Salem, N.C., died Feb. 18. Spouse: Leamon Riley Sowell, Sr. (deceased). Parents: Elliott Dupree Mitchell and Zenobia Odum Mitchell. Children: Leamon Sowell Jr., Zenobia Sowell-Bianchi, Deborah Sowell-Cromartie, Rebekah Sowell-Ratliff, Stefany Sowell-McDuffie; four grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 22 at Russell Funeral Home, Winston-Salem.

Steria, Perry Christian, 71, Lowville, N.Y., died Feb. 19, following a collision. Spouse: Beth M. Boshart Steria. Parents: Ralph and Alta Yousey Steria. Funeral: Feb. 24 at Lowville Mennonite Church.

Suter, James Russell, 97, Bluffton, Ohio, died Jan. 24. Spouse: Treva Dillman Suter. Spouse: Mabel Lora Suter (deceased). Spouse: Elvira B. Niswander Suter (deceased). Parents: Gilbert H. and Martha Schumacher Suter. Children: Fred, John, Barbara Suter; five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Memorial service: April 12 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

Swartzendruber, Harold Leon, 90, Goshen, Ind., died Feb. 11. Spouse: Lucille Mae Graber Swartzendruber. Parents: Edwin E. and Rose Ella Driver Swartzendruber. Children: Janet Reid, Jim, Steve; two grandchildren; four step-grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; six step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 15 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Thomas, A. Martha Eash, 94, Hollsopple, Pa., died Dec. 11, 2013. Spouse: Paul S. Thomas (deceased). Parents: Menno and Lizzie Thomas Eash. Children: Marvin E., Stanwin P., Dale O.; eight grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 14 at Thomas Mennonite Church, Hollsopple.

Yordy, Lois Elaine Bertsche, 89, Meadows, Ill., died Feb. 13, of cerebrovascular accident. Spouse: Clair Yordy (deceased). Parents: Nyle and Iva McCormick Bertsche. Children: Gary, Jeff; four grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 18 at Calvert-Johnson-Froelich Memorial Home, Flanagan, Ill.

Journey to
JERUSALEM
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Alumni and friends will walk where Jesus walked, visit historic Old Testament sites and learn more about the current Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Dr. Randall S. Keeler, associate professor of religion, will lead alumni and friends on a tour of the Holy Land unlike any other.

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Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.30 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite*, call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email advertising@themennonite.org.

Rossmere Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., is seeking a **lead pastor**. Located on the outskirts of Lancaster city, we are a congregation of about 90 people committed to Anabaptist understandings. We are affiliated with Lancaster Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA. Applicants are invited to contact Jeremy Brubaker by email jeremy@rossmeremennonitechurch.org or phone 610-223-2249.

Mennonite Central Committee seeks an **administrative assistant** (service worker/funded volunteer) to help create a productive office environment in Ephrata, Pa. Be a part of the effort that sends relief supplies to people in need around the world. Check online at serve.mcc.org or email eas@mcc.org for more information.

Camp Deerpark is seeking a **construction supervisor** for our Children's Camp Village, which when completed will consist of eight cabins, a program center and pump house. The qualified candidate must be comfortable with nonconventional construction practices. While this is a supervisory position the role requires extensive hands-on craftsmanship. Tasks include: operating woodmizer sawmill, excavating equipment, plumbing, etc. A three-year commitment is required. Compensation includes salary, medical and housing. Contact Ken Bontrager at 845-754-8669 or admin@campdeerpark.org.

Eastern Mennonite School is in the search process for the following positions:

- **biological sciences high school instructor**
- **learning support services including special education** (grades 6-12)

Successful candidates will share a passion for working with children and youth in a Christ-centered academic environment. Eastern Mennonite School offers a competitive salary and benefits package commensurate with experience and is an equal opportunity employer. Teacher licensure required. Please email leamanp@emhs.net for detail information and an application.

Connexus Language Institute in South Korea seeks **university graduates to teach elementary school students English** while living in Christian community. One- to two-year commitment. Round-trip airfare provided. Email master@connexus.co.kr.

Bethesda Mennonite Church, located in Henderson, Neb., is seeking a **full-time pastor** to be part of a multipastoral team. The candidate should have a strong commitment to Anabaptist values and theology along with strong preaching, communicatio and community outreach skills and interests. An M.Div. degree with pastoral experience is desired but not required. The Bethesd congregation, located in rural Nebraska, is a member of Central Plains Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA. Interested people should contact Central Plains Conference Minister, Tim Detweiler, P.O. Box 352, Kalona, IA 52247, or call 319-458-0224.

Landisville Mennonite Church, Landisville, Pa., is seeking a **full-time associate pastor of youth and young adults**. For more information, please contact the search committee at search@landisvillemennonite.org.

First Mennonite Church of San Francisco seeks a **half-tim to three-quarter-time associate pastor** to partner with ou pastor in serving our growing congregation. FMCSF is a vibrant, open and affirming, urban Anabaptist congregation of about 150 20 percent of whom are children under the age of 18. Details at http://www.menno.org/.

Eastern Mennonite University is seeking a **head women's soccer coach** to coach, direct, recruit and administer the women's soccer program along with other duties as assigned by the director of athletics. He/she must be committed to the values and mission of the university and operate the program in adherence to the rules and regulations of the Old Dominion Athletic Conference and Division III of the NCAA. Bachelor's degree required or an equivalent combination of knowledge, skills and experience that equates to a degree. Master's degree preferred. Minimum of successful high school coaching required. Collegiate coaching preferred with recruiting experience. Skills required include recruiting, practice and match planning, teaching soccer techniques and strategies, relational and communication with co lege students, administrative and budget operations, and overall leadership of the program. The head women's soccer position is half-time, with the option for qualified individuals of additional r sponsibilities within the university bringing it to a full benefit-lev position of at least three-quarter-time, .75 FTE. Application review will begin immediately. EMU reserves the right to fill this position immediately or to extend the search as circumstances may warrant. For initial consideration, send application, cover letter, resume and contact information for three references to: Human Resources, Eastern Mennonite University, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802, hr@emu.edu, fax: 540-432-4744. Eastern Mennonite University is an equal opportunity employer, committed to enhancing diversity across the institution. EMU conducts criminal background investigations as part of the hiring process. EMU complies with federal and state requirements for nondiscrim ination in employment with regard to sex, age, race, disability, na tional and ethnic origin.

Witmer Heights Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., is seeking a **lead pastor** (20-30 hours/week). Learn more about us at www.whmchurch.org. Applicants are invited to contact Neil Reinford at neilreinford@aol.com.

College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., seeks a three-fourths-time **pastor of outreach and Christian formation**. Mennonite Church USA salary guidelines will be followed. Interested candidates may contact Doug Kaufman, IN-MI Conference Pastor for Leadership Transitions at doug@im.mennonite.net.

New Campus Ministry opening: **University Mennonite Church**, State College, Pa., seeks applicants for a new full time **Anabaptist campus minister** to work with students at Penn State. Visit www.universitymennonite.org for more details. To apply, contact Allegheny Mennonite Conference Minister, Donna Mast. Email donnam@alleghenymennoniteconference.org, Office telephone: 814-443-2007.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read **Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

Eastern Mennonite University seeks qualified applicants for an **associate director of technology systems**. The full-time associate director of technology systems oversees data center operations, network infrastructure, systems and servers, and application development and integration. Bachelor's degree in related field required. Five years in positions of increasing responsibility in computer-related fields with at least three years as a web, network or systems administrator. Ability to work in a team environment and with multiple customers. Aptitude for prioritizing requests and excellent problem-determination skills. Ability to learn new technical environments, communicate effectively, work independently, supervise team members and select and implement new technology. Product knowledge of Microsoft Active Directory, GNU/Linuz systems, Cisco and Aruba networking, PHP and Ruby development. Submit application, resume and contact information for three references to: hr@emu.edu. For more information visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanresources. Persons who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

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A FORUM FOR THE VOICES OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA

Meeting the neighbors

Sherah-Leigh Gerber is director of advancement for Virginia Mennonite Missions. She lives with her husband and two young children in Harrisonburg, Va.

On my first day at my new job, my husband and I were hustling to get out the door, since we were also going to do the dance of car sharing so that we could get our state inspections taken care of. Wrangling two small children, winter gear and the bags of stuff I was taking in to my office had pushed us about 10 minutes behind my schedule. Then I realized that one of our cars wouldn't start. Of course, it was the one in the single car garage, the one with no easy way to be jumped.

That evening, as we pushed our car out of the garage and worked to get the other car close enough to make the cables reach, I wondered how many of our neighbors were peering down at the sight. Two adults, two small children and a comedy of errors with our two cars.

The next morning, we discovered that it wasn't merely a charge that needed to happen but a whole new battery. So, for the second time in two days, we repeated our finagling to get the car started.

We've lived in our new neighborhood for two weeks now and haven't met any of our neighbors. Not only have we been out jumping our cars (twice), we also had moving day, playing outside in the sandbox and an unfortunate challenge with the mailbox bank and package retrieval key that wasn't working. I know we are all busy people, absorbed in our own worries, but I find it hard to believe that all these kerfuffles have gone unnoticed. While I wish that my neighbors would come to me, offering a smile or introduction, perhaps even with a loaf of fresh bread in hand, it seems that it will not happen that way.

Mother and daughter making donuts.
Photo provided

It's not just in my neighborhood that I have to push beyond what comes as naturally comfortable to me. Part of moving to a new place means finding a new church home, too. In the place we have come from and the place we have moved to, there is no shortage of Mennonite congregations. But of all the parts of moving I have complained about, settling into a new church has been the part I wish we could just sk over.

While driving across town, I noticed a banner hanging outside a church building. It said something like, "We would like to meet all our neighbors; please come visit our church." While I assume the intent is to say that all are welcome check out this congregation, it seems that leavin the uncomfortable part to those who are new won't yield much result. Wouldn't it be more effective for members of this congregation to be o meeting people in the community?

And then I was convicted—how welcoming have I been? Am I not guilty of just sitting in the same pew each week, expecting others to come and feel welcome? Is it really reasonable to expect that people will come through the doors—take the risk and discomfort of being the new person?

If I, a cradle Mennonite, am so anxious about going to a new church, how must it feel to the new Christian or anyone new to the tradition? Though hardly "young adults" by many definitions, we fit into the highly desired group for congregations—a young family. We are easy to recognize as new and easy to connect with since you can ask about the children or direct us to the nursery. If we wonder where we'll fit in a new church, how much more must those who are single, widowed or in marginalized groups feel abou visiting a congregation?

It is our family tradition to make homemade donuts on the first snow day of the year, and recently there was some snow in our new town—enough for a snow day. So I decided to introduce my 2½-year-old daughter to this special treat. In addition to being best fresh, even when making only a partial recipe, you still end up with more donuts than one family should consume.

After nap time was over, I bundled us both up. We took our paper-plated offerings of fried dough and knocked on the doors around us. I risked, knowing there could be awkward conversation o rebuffs. I pushed myself beyond my comfort zone in yet another context, not only to model for my daughter what a good neighbor could be but because it is the start of friendship and community and the best way to build the church. TM

FILM REVIEWS

The Son of God (PG-13), featuring one more European Jesus, tells the story of Jesus' life, death and Resurrection with no surprises and little imagination. For a more complex and engaging experience, read the Gospels.—*Gordon Houser*

The Wind Rises (PG-13) is another stunning animated film by Japanese master Hayao Miyazaki. Here he presents a fictionalized biography of Jiro Horikoshi, the man who designed Japanese fighter planes used during World War II. The film dramatizes the dilemma of an artist seeking to make something beautiful that is then used to kill people. Jiro's story also evokes emotion as he falls in love with a girl who has tuberculosis.—*gh*

BOOK REVIEWS

The Oral Gospel Tradition by James D.G. Dunn (Eerdmans, 2013, $45) collects 15 essays by the New Testament scholar that argue for the oral use and transmission of the Jesus tradition that led to the Gospels. Thus, Dunn writes, "when Scripture is seen as a 'living tradition,' its function as word of God for the here and now is clarified and enhanced." This is a scholarly book with important insights.—*gh*

Discerning God's Will Together: Biblical Interpretation in the Free Church Tradition by Ervin Stutzman (Cascadia Publishing House, 2013, $16.95) is a good introduction to the topic and relevant to today's church. Stutzman also provides helpful sources for further study and includes responses from readers.—*gh*

Christian Philosophy: A Systematic and Narrative Introduction by Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen (BakerAcademic, 2013, $22.99) offers a helpful overview of philosophy while presenting a Christian critique. The authors claim that "a good philosophy and a good theology will lead back into *greater* engagement with Scripture rather than away from it."—*gh*

Climate change calls for a new politics

Denial is a powerful force. When we don't want to face an uncomfortable reality, particularly one we may share responsibility for, we tend to deny its existence.

This seems to be the case with climate change. In his book *A Political Theology of Climate Change* (Eerdmans, 2013, $30), Michael S. Northcott notes that while science indicates that "the earth is warming faster than at any previous point in human or earth history, … the rate of change from the point of view of one human generation … is imperceptibly slow."

To help us face this reality, he offers a political theology that "situates culture in creation and politics in the geography of the nations."

He ties this approach to Scripture, showing the development of a political theology from Genesis 1 through Revelation, then on into Christian history, up to the present.

Politics has to do with how we organize ourselves to make decisions about how we treat one another.

We face major problems. If we don't greatly diminish our use of fossil fuels, Northcott writes, we will see "a growth in civil conflict and mass migration as populations—particularly in developing countries—experience growing energy, food and water insecurity."

A study by the Central Intelligence Agency argues that climate change "will produce consequences that exceed the capacity of the affected societies or global systems to manage, and therefore will have global security implications serious enough to compel international response."

Northcott notes that "those who follow the science most closely, and understand its implications, are *more afraid* than the non-scientists." Meanwhile, "coal, oil and gas corporations have poured vast funds into anti-climate science lobby groups and think tanks." This is called short-term thinking. It's also called selfish.

As Northcott puts it: "Resistance to climate change science is … strongest among individuals, groups and organizations who identify most strongly with the core political claim that individual choice and the pursuit of self-interest in consumption and production activities are the sources of the human good, of freedom and flourishing."

But Scripture shows us a different politics. "The triumph of Christ over earthly powers presages a new peace between humanity and creation," Northcott writes. And "for the Apostle Paul the salvation of humanity in the Incarnation represents the potential renewal of creation."

Northcott traces the development of our view of nature and our place in it, until today, "to be modern, then, is to deny that the weather is political, or that politics influences the climate."

We keep operating under the assumption that we are somehow separate from the creation and have no responsibility toward it.

Since "God so loved the world" (John 3:16)—and that word is "kosmos,"—our continuing destruction of it is an affront to God.

We are also called to love our neighbor, something the nations are not doing. Northcott writes: "The current refusal of the nations to acknowledge their ecological responsibilities to promote economic and political practices within limits also promotes a growing tendency to scapegoat the poor and destitute both within and beyond national borders."

Northcott calls on Christians to remind the nations of their responsibilities to the growing number of migrants who will appear at their borders as a result of climate change.

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

the United States not get consideration in this matter? I am wondering if we may avoid church divisions by allowing autonomy for congregations to decide for themselves how to follow God's leading, rather than a conference deciding for them.—*Ruby Lehman, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Historically the Anabaptists faced ethical issues with the question, What do the Scriptures say? Mennonites need to ask the same question about the LGBT movement, which is making inroads in our communities with some degree of acceptance. First, the movement lacks a concern for sexual morality. Walter Brueggemann was correct when he said that we live in a "promiscuous, self-indulgent society." We should meditate on passages such as Romans 1:18-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:8-11.

Second, the movement has an inadequate basis for marriage. An essential ingredient for marriage is love, but biblical marriage includes more than this. Many states now permit same-sex marriage. Two people can be legally married, but this falls short of biblical marriage. Wolfhart Pannenberg says that if a church no longer treats homosexual activity as a departure from the biblical norm, it would stand against the unequivocal witness of Scripture. We should give careful attention to Ephesians 5:22-33.

Third, the movement opens the door to polygamy or multiple partners. If love between two people is the primary requirement for legal marriage, then logically a third or fourth person could be added to the marriage. We should look carefully at Genesis 2:19-25 and Mark 10:2-9.—*John R. Martin, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Opinion pieces such as that by Norman Kraus (Opinion, March) suggest there is a growing consensus that sin only exists where there is a human victim. By this definition, idolatry would not be a sin. The only reason God gives for his prohibition against homosexual intimacy in Leviticus 18 is that it is detestable to him, not because it produces a human victim. If we're going to jettison what Leviticus says about God, is anything in the Old Testament reliable? If Paul isn't to be believed in Romans 1, are we essentially left with only the Gospels? Even there, are we to be literalists? It was literalism that made me a pacifist, and, I suspect, the early Anabaptists as well. It makes more sense to kill dangerous people than to love them. As we question the veracity of Article 19 of the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, we might also question Article 22. We must also acknowledge that if the church can bless the marriage of gay couples, it cannot deny blessing to loving, committed incestuous couples and polygamists.—*Scott Smith, Greensboro, N.C.*

In Matthew 10:34-36, Jesus speaks of bringing division. In some ways, this is happening in our church—our family—over the topic of homosexuality. What's at stake here is truth.

The cold, hard reality is that only one side represents truth. Jesus also said that anyone who loves their father, mother, son or daughter more than him is not worthy of him (Matthew 10:37). Do we love our "family"—our church institution—more than Jesus?

The call for unity has two components: (1) respecting and treating each other with love and (2) institutional preservation. We are called to care about truth without compromising compassion. Conflict is scary and bad for an institution. But it seems fake to call for unity when there is such an obvious disunity on this topic. To prevent the search for truth from dividing or separating us may be a sign that both sides are straying from Jesus. Either side has the option to leave and form a separate institution. This would allow both groups to fully express their vision of truth. If this happens, people will leave the church, people will join the church. It would be a roller coaster. But God is in control, and God will favor the truth—whichever side it is.

Furthermore, one side seems to have more power and could potentiall impose its perspective on the other. I this case, the best nonviolent respons could also be to leave and form a separate institution. Either way, separatio is difficult, but Jesus said that followi the truth will be difficult and can involve persecution. Maybe people will find a way to reconcile and move forward. I hope so. But the truth divides and a commitment to truth can come a price—the cost of discipleship and bearing one's cross.—*Ethan Bodnaru Syracuse, N.Y.*

Regarding our current and perennial problem, using the General Conferenc Mennonite Church way of letting each congregation decide on membership i their own congregations is the best w to go, to avoid splitting again. Then th language Mennonite Church USA use about marriage would need to be changed. We'll still lose some congreg tions. This may bring anarchy, but the alternative is that those who favor cor plete inclusion of gays secede and for a new conference so both conferences meetings could be held for spiritual growth and not friction. No loyal Anabaptist will change their minds on thi It goes against our ancestry to give u our beliefs under pressure.—*Mary Bontrager, Goshen, Ind.*

A Mennonite Pope

Although I have done only some selec tive reading in the March issue, I muc appreciated the excellent and well-wri ten article by Robert Brenneman, "We Have a Mennonite Pope."

A couple of thoughts stood out for me in the article by Myron Augsburge as being timely and thought-provokin his distinction between "sin" and "sins" (page 23) and his reminder: "If we are to be Anabaptist in the 21st century, we must discover the centrality of Jesus in all of life." What a challenging task you have, Anna! May Go bless you and grant you wisdom for this task.—*Wilma Shank, Goshen, Ind*

Salty speech

For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.—Galatians 5:14-15 TNIV

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.—Colossians 4:6 TNIV

As a scholar of rhetoric, I've long been intrigued with the metaphors we live by. Some of the most interesting ones we use equate ideas with food.

Consider the following everyday examples:

We weren't being fed so we started attending a new church.

I wasn't about to swallow that lie.

She fed us half-baked ideas.

All he did was regurgitate old theories.

She gave us some new ideas to chew on.

He spewed out his anger toward me.

You've surely noticed it in Scripture as well. For example, the Psalmist (19:10) declares that the decrees of the Lord are "more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb." The two biblical "food metaphors" that caught my attention this week are cited at the beginning of this column. The Apostle Paul was making a case for thoughtful speech in response to the challenges of communication with outsiders or people in conflict.

I wonder if Paul would have said it any differently if he'd been reading Facebook over the last few weeks as members of Mennonite Church USA have pummeled each with words. With Paul, I fear that if we continue to bite and devour each other via social media, we might end up destroying each other. At the very least, we will erode the fragile sense of trust that holds us together in common cause.

Sometimes we speak of salty speech, a metaphoric reference to swearing like a sailor or the use of language not fit for polite company. But although Paul was familiar with the ways of the sea, he meant something quite different when he spoke of "speech seasoned with salt." In the idiom of his time, he was referring to speech that was both gracious and wise. How I long to see those characteristics displayed in the emotive expressions and emails we exchange with each other, the texts and tweets that race along the virtual highways of our day.

Several years ago, in response to heated political rhetoric in Washington, Sojourners invited Christians to sign a pledge of peace and civility. I signed that pledge and invite you to savor the selected quotations for yourself:

"We commit that our dialogue with each other will reflect the spirit of the Scriptures, which tell us, in relating to each other, to be 'quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry' " (James 1:19).

"We recognize that we cannot function together as citizens of the same community, whether local or national, unless we are mindful of how we treat each other. Each of us must therefore 'put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body' " (Ephesians 4:25).

"We pledge that when we disagree, we will do so respectfully, without falsely impugning the other's motives, attacking the other's character or questioning the other's faith. We will be mindful of our language, being neither arrogant nor boastful in our beliefs as we strive to 'be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love' " (Ephesians 4:2).

"We believe that it is more difficult to hate others, even adversaries and enemies, when we are praying for them. We commit to pray for each other, those with whom we agree and those with whom we may disagree, so that we may be faithful witnesses to our Lord, who prayed 'that they may be one' " (John 17:22).

Salty commitments but filled with grace and wisdom. I can taste it even now. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

I fear that if we continue to bite and devour each other via social media, we might end up destroying each other.

Mennonite Church USA

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With our bodies first

Anna Groff

At the women's conference in February, the importance of talking in person about complex and personal issues struck me in a new way.

Close to 200 women gathered at the All You Need is Love: Honoring the Diversity of Women's Voices in Theology conference in Leesburg, Va., Feb. 20-22. (See pages 32-33). Several powerful themes emerged: women's bodies, self-love, and racial and sexual identity.

These themes were apparent in the worship theme song, "I found God in myself … and I love her fiercely," based on a quote by Ntozake Shange. Workshops on sexual abuse and ethics, motherhood, miscarriage, beauty and yoga provided space for women to embrace their humanity. In a concrete way, Annabeth Roeschley led the participants through guided meditation with movement during worship.

The most poignant worship time for me came on the last day and included three stories from women regarding self-love, sexual violation and LGBT identity. After the time of sharing, women joined hands, singing—and some crying—as they weaved around the room. Then the women joined circle groups, where they reflected on the service.

Despite disagreeing theologically, women talked and embraced.

Afterward, I considered the raw nature of this time. I knew that not all 194 women in that room shared the same views on these topics.

For example, while inclusive language and referring to God as "She" was the unofficial norm throughout the conference, not all participants or speakers chose those expressions. Not all women felt at ease during the talk by the speaker who freely shared her story of what it means to love others and herself as a lesbian.

Yet during that final worship service, the women connected sharing space, touch and music. Despite disagreeing theologically, women talked and embraced.

When the focus remains on our bodies, we ar reminded of the importance of sharing stories fa to face, as in Leesburg. When the issue of the LGBT community and the church is discussed only through letters, email and via social media, we often fail to remember the deep humanity of the issue.

From 1999 to 2012, *The Mennonite* had a mor torium on articles and letters that address Mennonite Church USA's teaching position on sexuality. Our plan now states that articles and letters published "need to have a positive and ed fying tone—even if offering critique—and say something new on the topic."

The moratorium went too far, and I am please it is now lifted—particularly in light of church events this year—but I do understand and value some of its original intentions.

As Gordon Houser, associate editor, said, ther is a danger in allowing letters to the editor and opinion articles to take the place of sitting down and talking with one another.

Readers tend to focus on how to respond in writing instead of truly hearing one another, he said. This will sound familiar to anyone who has participated in a talking circle or conflict resolution exercise.

While I find wonder in the written word, I hop we will continue to prioritize time to gather together to safely share space and stories with one another.—*ag*

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Marcus Smucker: pastor, teacher, spiritual director

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- From tragedy to apocalypse
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TheMennonite
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The Mennonite is the publication of Mennonite Church USA, which established three purposes for the magazine: to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, to promote the ministries of Mennonite Church USA and to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. *The Mennonite* (ISSN 1522-7766) is published on the first Tuesday of each month by the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Periodicals postage paid at Elkhart, IN 46517 and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates for one year: $46 to U.S. addresses and $54 USD to Canadian addresses. Group rates available. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite*, or the board for The Mennonite, Inc. Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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Mennonite Church USA

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite*, 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Time out for clarity

Ervin Stutzman's reference to the Quaker tradition of "communal indifference" in group discernment reminded me of a comparable term used by English Quakers in business meetings—"time out for clearness." ("Cultivating Indifference," March). When differing opinions precluded agreement, the clerk of the meeting might ask for "time out for clearness"—a period of silence when each participant is asked to think about "that of God" as expressed in the other's point of view. Frequently this led to an agreed minute. If not, the issue might come up at a subsequent meeting.—*Harold D. Lehman, Harrisonburg, Va.*

MC USA still not Evangelical

The use of the term "Evangelical" in the title of Myron S. Augsburger's excellent article "Anabaptist and Evangelical" (March) once again raised dismay in my heart (as a former "Evangelical," now of the Anabaptist persuasion) at the idea that an activity of the Anabaptists is being described as Evangelical when the author is actually writing about evangelism. Both words come from the Greek word translated into English as "gospel" or "good news." The word evangelical is both a noun and an adjective. As an adjective it describes a set of doctrines or beliefs, as well as organizations that adhere to those beliefs, whereas as a noun it names a person or organization that adheres to those beliefs. Evangelism (noun) refers to the proclamation of that good news and entails the making of followers of Jesus. Certainly, Mennonite Church USA should be doing this evangelistic work. What separates Anabaptists and Mennonites from Evangelicals is the understanding of what the gospel is and how a disciple lives. A better title could have been "Anabaptist and Evangelistic."
—*Robert V. Clausen, Greenville, Ill.*

A new papal office?

Do we have a new papal office, namely, "director of Mennonite Church USA," as *The Mennonite* insists on naming it? If so, what is the relationship to the offices of "moderator of the delegate assembly" and the moderators of our are conferences? Is the office bishop of the national Mennonite church? In a conversation with Ervin Stutzman, he made clear that he is chairperson of th staff of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board. Does that make him executive director of the board? And how is the board related to the church? Do we have a new Vatican with a small v?

I have great respect for the skill and dedication of Stutzman. But are we not loading an institutional position with official authority that our polity does not accommodate? Are we not confounding a bishop's role with an executive's role? The Roman Pope is a bishop (spiritual office) with executive authority. We say something about our ecclesiology when we designate the executive of the board staff as executive director of the church.—*C. Norman Kraus, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Abortion responses

I share the hope that Matthew Ingersoll expresses in his letter, "MCC and Abortion" (March), that "we seek first the kingdom of God and realize we are subjects first to his authority and allegiance." The Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office addresses a range of domestic and foreign policy priorities that grow out of

MCC's programs. We carry out this work without regard to partisan concerns, regularly affirming and critiquing proposals by members of both political parties. Abortion is an important "right to life" issue and one that can be addressed in many ways, not limited to the public policy sphere. There is much, for example, that local congregations can do to support women facing difficult decisions so that fewer women choose the option of abortion. —*Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach, director, MCC U.S. Washington Office*

The letters on abortion in the February and March issues assume that making abortion illegal solves the abortion problem. Before Roe vs. Wade, I worked at a large urban hospital where we often saw young women who suffered from botched or attempted abortions. At times, both the fetus and the mother lost their lives. After abortion became legal, our hospital, being a government-charity hospital, was mandated by law to provide abortions. At first I participated as a team member in performing abortion procedures. I soon decided not be a part of any abortion procedure because I felt it was both morally and ethically wrong. I believe we must strongly teach against abortion. However, legislation to make it illegal will not solve the problem. Whether abortion is legal or illegal, we as a society must bear some of the moral burden for the resultant death of young women and their unborn children.—*Willard H. Albrecht, Indianapolis*

Rule of Christ skipped for Yoder?
From its beginning, the Anabaptist movement emphasized the redemptive process of the Rule of Christ (Matthew 18:15-17). This process seems to have been skipped in the case of John Howard Yoder. One can empathize with the petitioners not desiring to face the accused or be named. To be sure, the charges could have been made through an intermediary. Fortunately, there was a conference/congregational process lasting four years that eventuated in genuine reconciliation.

John M. Bender, Prairie Street Mennonite Church elder, sums up the results of the process in 1996: "The charges against John have been satisfactorily settled and closed. ACTION: Moved and carried to recognize John's continued membership at Prairie Street. … The meeting (Feb. 1, 1997) turned the tables for me in terms of apology, repentance on the part of John, restitution and restored fellowship with the congregation. … John wanted to make things right as much as he could, but the multiple parties in the process had no clear lines of communication with each other" (Letter to Gross, 2013). Yoder himself had established a fund to be used for those he had hurt. Those involved in the process concluded that Yoder was aware of needed boundaries and would from then on stay within such boundaries. Indeed, Yoder apologized publicly for the "inappropriateness of his actions and his desire for healing for the people he hurt" (Ted Grimsrud, 1998). We gave Yoder his life back, rejoicing that an errant had repented.—*Leonard Gross, Goshen, Ind.*

Insensitive to what some hold dear
"Easter Beyond Explanation" (April) invites us to the "place of not knowing" whether Jesus was really resurrected, interpreting Easter as a thinning of boundaries between heaven and earth and God and human, and meaning, "You are divine, and God is human." Did you really want to run an article trampling on what a vast majority of your readers hold extremely dear?—*Harold Miller, Broadway, Va.*

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

Our cover story this month (page 12) is on Marcus Smucker, a church conflict mediator who lives in Lititz, Pa. In October 2013, Ron Adams, pastor of Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church and one of our Grace and Truth columnists, wrote to us suggesting we feature Smucker's story to "celebrate his work in the church."

"Through his teaching career at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., his spiritual direction trainings, his conflict resolution work across the denomination, he has influenced and blessed Mennonite Church USA in many ways," wrote Adams. "He deeply loves the church and has devoted himself to helping it be as healthy and faithful as it can be." We also want to thank Jonathan Charles, a professional photographer from Lancaster, Pa., who volunteered his time to photograph Smucker.

Also in the feature section is a piece by John D. Roth (page 16) that addresses conflict in the church surrounding LGBT issues. He encourages us to find hope and see our current situation through the lens of apocalypse, not tragedy. "Though we generally associate the word 'apocalypse' with end-time scenarios of destruction, the more appropriate meaning of the term is 'revelation' or 'disclosure of something that is hidden,'" Roth writes.

Our news section features two original news stories (pages 38-39) from the Southwest. The first story covers a conference that explored a Christian response to the unparalleled environmental crisis today. It was held in April at Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church. The second story is on Tina Schlabach of Tucson, Ariz., who visits women in detention centers. The story is written by our intern, Kate Yoder, who we say thank you and goodbye to the end of this month.—*Editor*

Weekly prayers ask for unity and wisdom

ELKHART, Ind.—Instead of eating lunch on Fridays, some members of the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) community are gathering for prayers for Mennonite Church USA.

David Miller, associate professor of missional leadership development, initiated this in early March with his own commitment to pray and fast every Friday at lunch time.

Similar to many in Mennonite Church USA, Miller was troubled in reading the "Rule of Love" and the "Transformation Letter," proposing different paths for Mennonite Church USA to respond to people in same-gender relationships.

Some of Miller's discomfort comes because he knows many of the people who have signed both letters. "These are people with whom I have served and studied; they are people who have been my students. They are people I trust and with whom I have shared at the Lord's table," he says.

When he made the commitment to fast and pray each Friday, he invited others from the seminary community, the Mennonite offices and the surrounding area to join in.—*AMBS*

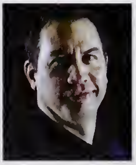
Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. 1 Samuel 16:7b

Dale D. Gehman

Bowmansville wins 40th Bible quiz tournament

Coaches for Bowmansville Mennonite Church's (Breaknock, Pa.) Bible quiz team talk strategy during a timeout at the 40th annual ACC Invitational Tournament. Seated, left to right, are Devin Weaver, Brett Haller, Erin Shirk and Derick Weaver; standing are Ethan Yoder (left) and coaches Audrey Haller and Donna Horst. On March 23, at Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School, Bowmansville 2 won first place, beating Petra 1 (New Holland, Pa.) in overtime. The event brings Bible quiz teams from Ohio, Virginia and Pennsylvania for Mennonite March Madness. This event dates back to when the Ohio and Eastern Conference's youth pastor, Don Yoder wanted a program to bring the youth from a distance together. This conference eventually became two conferences: Ohio and Atlantic Coast.—*Dale D. Gehman*

Hege receives Goering Award for an outstanding music alumnus



NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—The first recipient of the Erwin C. Goering and Verna Kaufman Goering Music Award is Daniel Hege, Janesville, N.Y., music director and conductor of the Wichita Symphony Orchestra and a 1987 Bethel graduate.

The family and friends of Verna Kaufman Goering, Moundridge, Kan., and the late Erwin C. Goering established the award named for the couple.

The award honors a Bethel College alumnus of outstanding character for distinguished achievement and recognition in music. The awardee may be a professional musician or a volunteer who has served the community, may demonstrate excellence in instrumental music, vocal music and/or conducting or may be a donor whose gifts have strengthened Bethel's music program.

The award carries a cash gift of $1,000, which was to be presented to Hege at Bethel College on April 27 during the annual Masterworks concert.—*Bethel College*

Iraqi Kurdistan trainees picnic to support Plowshares activists

IRAQI KURDISTAN—Participants in Christian Peacemaker Team's Iraqi Kurdistan training planned and participated in a demonstration March 9-11 on behalf of Megan Rice, Michael R. Walli and Greg Boertje-Obed, three American peacemakers imprisoned because of their nonviolent action at the Y-12 Oakridge Tennessee Highly-Enriched Uranium Manufacturing Facility.

On July 28, 2012, Rice, Walli and Boertje-Obed, unimpeded by security, crossed four fences and walked for two hours in the area before the guards found them. They splashed human blood on the walls and spray painted peace messages. While waiting for the facility security, they picnicked, and when the guards arrived, they offered to share bread with them. For this action, which exposed to the world the threat of the nuclear weapons, the peacemakers received sentences of five (Walli and Boertje-Obed) and three (Rice) years in prison.

To mirror the Plowshares' action, the trainees held a picnic outside the U.S. consulate in Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan. The group of eight (trainees, trainers and a support person) arrived with a picnic carpet, apples, leaflets, photos of the prisoners, cookies tagged with Internet links and banners stating: "Being a peacemaker is *not* a crime" and, "Thank them, don't punish them."—*CPT*

Values-based Leadership Program registration

GOSHEN, Ind.—Registration for the 13th class of the Values-based Leadership Program is open. The program is comprised of two sessions, scheduled for Oct. 28-30 and for Feb. 24-26, 2015, both at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center, Mount Pleasant, Pa.

The Values-based Leadership Program helps individuals in leadership roles gain a fresh perspective, one that views leadership and organizational processes through a uniquely Anabaptist lens. This perspective guides participants in following Jesus' servant leadership model while celebrating both community and diversity. A participant will come away grounded in leadership practice in faith, values and life experiences.

Registration is limited to 45 participants for this five-day program, which is divided into two parts. Leaving a time gap between part one and two allows participants to reflect on and begin implementing what they are learning and bring real-life experience back to the second session.

Bluffton University photo

Appalachian roots

Self-described "Affrilachian" writer Crystal Wilkinson talks with Bluffton (Ohio) University student Justin Neufeld Weaver, a sophomore from Bluffton, following her forum presentation April 1, at which she shared her experiences of growing up black in rural Kentucky and learning to embrace her heritage. Much of the region's black population can be traced to slavery, she said. Her roots have enabled her to write about what she sees, not just what she feels—a common mistake for a beginning writer, she said.—*Bluffton University*

Tuition for the two-part program costs $945 before Aug. 31 ($1,045 afterward). Participants are responsible for expenses associated with transportation, materials, and lodging and meals during the program. Register and learn more at www.vblp.org/register or call 800-839-1021.—*MEA*

Goshen College students win state awards for campus publications

GOSHEN, Ind.—Goshen College students involved with campus publications won awards for their work at the Indiana Collegiate Press Association (ICPA) competition for print media, held April 5 at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

Among the winners were staff members of *The Record*, the student newspaper, and *Red Cents*, the student arts journal.

Eleven staff members of *The Record* received individual awards, including Phil Scott, Isaac Fast, Kate Yoder, Doreen Arnold, Seth Zimmerman, Logan Miller, Twila Albrecht, Lauren Stoltzfus, Becca Kraybill, Alex Pletcher and Christina Hofer.

The awards cover the calendar year 2013, during which Kate Stoltzfus served as editor during the fall semester and Ariel Ropp during the spring semester. Duane Stoltzfus, professor of communication, serves as the paper's advisor.

Red Cents, a literary and arts journal edited and published by Goshen College students, took several honors for its 2013 edition, including third place for Best Literary Magazine of the Year. Mary Roth served as editor for the 2013 *Red Cents* edition. Ann Hostetler, professor of English, and Jessica Baldanzi, associate professor of English, co-advise the magazine.

The association's annual contest recognizes the best student work in Indiana college newspapers and other publications. *The Record* is entered in Division III, for colleges with a non-daily publication and an enrollment of 2,000 or fewer full-time students, and *Red Cents* competes in a single division against all colleges and universities in Indiana.—*Goshen College*

Hesston College students travel for learning

HESSTON, Kan.—Travel for continued learning was a popular option for Hesston College students during spring break March 8-16. Four groups traveled around the globe to experience their majors of study in new locations and cultures and learn beyond typical campus projects and interactions while serving others.

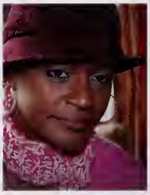
Eleven nursing students and two sponsors experienced firsthand just how different India is from the United States in everything from cultural practices and hospitality to stark differences in health care. A group of nine nursing students traveled to Russia with faculty leader Gregg Schroeder and his wife, Cindy. Education instructors Tami Keim and Marissa King led eight students to Puerto Rico, and 14 students spent the week serving with Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) in Duluth, Minn., accompanied by Disaster Management Program director Russ Gaeddert and campus pastor Todd Lehman.—*Hesston College*

Arvada Mennonite now Living Light of Peace

ARVADA, Colo.—After 54 years as Arvada Mennonite Church, the congregation celebrated a new name and officially installed Jeni Hiett Umble as pastor on March 30. The new name is Living Light of Peace.

The church continues its affiliations with Mountain States Mennonite Conference of Mennonite Church USA and the Church of the Brethren Western Plains District. It is a publicly affirming member of the Supportive Communities Network.—*Janice Ediger*

Earthly examples of resurrection



Cyneatha Millsaps is pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill.

Do you know that in 2011, 688,384 men and women—approximately 1,885 individuals a day—were released from state or federal custody? According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 4.8 million offenders were under community supervision by the end of 2011.

These men and women are expected to emerge from places of darkness and even personal hells and be able to function properly in our society. These men and women are given little guidance and assistance in the re-emerging process. Actually our society makes it extremely difficult for them to re-engage with family and communities because of our unwillingness to trust and forgive.

What does the Resurrection of Christ mean to us? Can the Resurrection only relate to Jesus, or do we see resurrecting moments in each other?

As Christians, we celebrate this Easter season reminding ourselves of the ultimate gift Jesus gave for all humankind. Jesus opened the windows of heaven for everyone who seeks the love and redemption of God. What does it mean to live a resurrected life? What earthly examples are there for the fallen, broken and confused? What is required of Christians to assist our friends and our enemies in their own resurrections?

> When men and women re-emerge from jail and prison, it is vital that the community of faith wraps its arms around them.

There was a young woman who became strung out on drugs in the late 1980s. She had several children, but because of her addictions she could not properly care for them. Her extended family assisted her in raising the children over the years. The children watched their mother struggle to survive on the streets and even be sent to prison for drug possession.

For more than 15 years this was their life, one nightmare after another. Late-night calls from friends and family warned them that the young woman had again been spotted around town in an awful state. At times the family wondered if she would survive or if a call would say she was found dead. But by the grace of God, she stumbled into a Christian drug rehab program for women. She checked in and gave herself to the process. She spent almost two years in the program, trying to get back her mind, emotions and spirit. She emerged from the center new, resurrected and loved. She never returned to the streets or drug life, even when times were hard. She talked about experiencing the love of God from strangers. She talked about experiencing genuine love, in spite o her past and her terrible mistakes. Because good people were willing to forgive her past and help her get on her feet, she lives a resurrected life.

When men and women re-emerge from jai and prison, it is vital that the community of faith wraps its arms around them. Re-entry programs need not be major activities within the church, bu programs that provide transportation to job interviews, funds for new identification and driver's licenses, safe spaces for monitored supervision with estranged children, lending libraries and pastoral counseling are helpful. For many returning from jail or prison, the greatest struggles are from within, Am I forgiven? Where do I start? What is this place [society]?

Our society is full of success stories and likely just as many failures, yet we serve a God who shows compassion and mercy. Christians are called to do the same. What does it require for us to help men and women recover from addictions and incarceration? How hard is it for us to forget the past and allow people to start again?

"For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonemen by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:22-26).

We celebrate the Resurrection of Christ because it affords us the opportunity to be resurrected in this life and the one to come. We must look for those earthly examples of resurrection to encourage one another and ourselves. TM

Is the Reformation still relevant?

On June 17, 1913, some 60 people, representing eight different missionary societies, met in Kikuyu, Kenya, for a landmark conversation about the future of the growing Protestant church in the region. Although the Kikuyu Conference of 1913 is largely forgotten today, the debate that unfolded at the gathering had far-reaching consequences. And the issues they raised continue to be relevant for the church today.

As in many colonial settings, the first Protestant missionaries to East Africa agreed to focus their efforts in distinct geographical areas, with the Presbyterians, Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists and other groups each concentrating their work in a defined region. Over time, however, the introduction of the railroad, improved roads and new forms of employment led to growing geographic mobility. As a result, members of one Protestant church frequently relocated to regions that were dominated by another denomination. So the question emerged: Did newcomers need to "convert" to the new church, or could they participate in Communion and the life of the local congregation while still retaining membership in their home denomination?

When church leaders gathered at Kikuyu in 1913 to discuss the matter, the conversation took an unexpected turn. Instead of simply defining a policy regarding Communion and membership, participants asked an even more fundamental question: Should the growing Christian church in East Africa continue to replicate the historic denominational churches of the West? Or should it create a new body—a united Protestant church—defined by the distinctive cultural context and theological priorities of its indigenous members?

The questions raised by the Kikuyu Conference of 1913 have not gone away. In the coming decade, most of the major groups that emerged from the Protestant Reformation—Lutherans, Anglicans, Reformed and Anabaptists—will commemorate the 500th anniversary of their origins. Those commemorations will inevitably recall the historical details of the founding heroes and remind members of the theological principles that were at stake in the divisions of the 16th century. What is less clear is exactly what these divisions 500 years ago mean for the global church in cultures and contexts far from Europe and North America. Should the church-dividing debates of the Reformation still matter to Christians in Ethiopia, Indonesia, Bolivia or the Congo today?

One way of answering that question was suggested by a recent gathering in Guatemala of nearly 120 Latin American Mennonite church leaders. Meeting as a "Consultation of Anabaptists in Latin America," leaders from 19 countries recognized their shared challenges. In many Latin America countries, theological identity is shaped within a complex kaleidoscope of Catholic, indigenous, liberationist, evangelical and neo-Pentecostal influences. The legacy of colonialism continues to find expression in political instability, autocratic forms of leadership, and vast disparities of income. And the insatiable North American hunger for illegal drugs fuels a booming narcotrafficking business, with all its attendant violence.

Yet as the group worshipped, read Scripture, reflected, prayed and argued together, several distinctive theological motifs emerged in response to these challenges. Most participants, for example, acknowledged that God's gift of forgiveness, compassion and grace was to be shared with others, including those on the margins, and even the enemy. The church, they agreed, was not an institution but a living community of real people, whose love for each other witnessed to the coming kingdom of God. True Christian leaders would be recognized by their humility and readiness to draw on the gifts of all their members.

To be sure, disagreements were also evident. Some church leaders took issue with the critique of neo-Pentecostalism, and not all were enthused about ecumenical conversations with Catholics. But the conversations were open and honest. At stake was not a defense of "Mennonite" identity. Nonetheless, the consultation concluded with a strong affirmation for a distinctive witness in Latin America, one with an Anabaptist inflection.

The legacy of the Anabaptist movement still matters to the global Mennonite church 500 years later. And I hope the leaders who gathered in Guatemala in 2014 will also gather in Switzerland in 2025 to commemorate Anabaptist beginnings. But the goal is not the preservation of a denominational identity inherited from the missionaries. Rather, it is to nurture a living tradition, enlivened by local readings of Scripture, strengthened by the insights of many members, enriched by conversations with other Christians, that bears witness to the gospel in a rich variety of cultural forms. TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.

Should the church-dividing debates of the Reformation still matter to Christians in Ethiopia, Indonesia, Bolivia or the Congo today?

Reasonable risks are good for children

When I was a boy, I and my friends wandered the neighborhood unsupervised. We walked to school and didn't worry about strangers. We had a tree house and built forts; we used our imagination to play various games.

Now that seems like a different world from today. I rarely see children playing outside in our neighborhood. And if they do, it's usually in their own yard.

No, I'm not just being nostalgic. This change in our culture has unhealthy consequences for our children. An article in *The Atlantic* (April) addresses this reality and calls for change.

In "Hey! Parents, Leave Those Kids Alone," Hanna Rosin points out that when kids face what to them seem like "really dangerous risks" and conquer them alone, this builds self-confidence and courage.

She quotes Joe Frost, a safety crusader whose influence brought drastic changes to playgrounds in the '80s but has now become concerned that we've gone too far. Adults have come to the mistaken view "that children must somehow be sheltered from all risks of injury," Frost writes, but "in the real world, life is filled with risks—financial, physical, emotional, social—and reasonable risks are essential for children's healthy development."

There has been a drastic change in parents' supervision of children. Rosin refers to a U.K. study that showed that "in 1971, 80 percent of third-graders walked to school alone. By 1990, that measure had dropped to 9 percent, and now it's even lower."

Parents routinely tell their children never to talk to strangers, "even though all available evidence suggests that children have about the same (very slim) chance of being abducted by a stranger as they did a generation ago," Rosin writes.

In fact, overall, crimes against children have been declining. One exception is family abduction. "The explosion in divorce in the '70s meant many more custody wars and many more children being smuggled away by one or the other of the parents," Rosin writes.

Ellen Sandseter, a professor of early-childhood education in Norway, published a paper in 2011 on children's risky play. She concluded that children "have a sensory need to taste danger and excitement," at least in their minds.

She identifies six kinds of risky play: (1) exploring heights, (2) handling dangerous tools, (3) being near dangerous elements, (4) rough-and-tumble play, (5) speed and (6) exploring on one's own.

The last one, she says, is the most important: "When they are left alone and can take full responsibility for their actions, and the consequences of their decisions, it's a thrilling experience." And they gain self-confidence.

She writes that "our fear of children being harmed," mostly in minor ways, "may result in more fearful children and increased levels of psychopathology."

Today, writes Rosin, "failure to supervise has become, in fact, synonymous with failure to parent." And this has resulted in a "continuous and ultimately dramatic decline in children's opportunities to play and explore in their own chosen ways," according to psychologist Peter Gray.

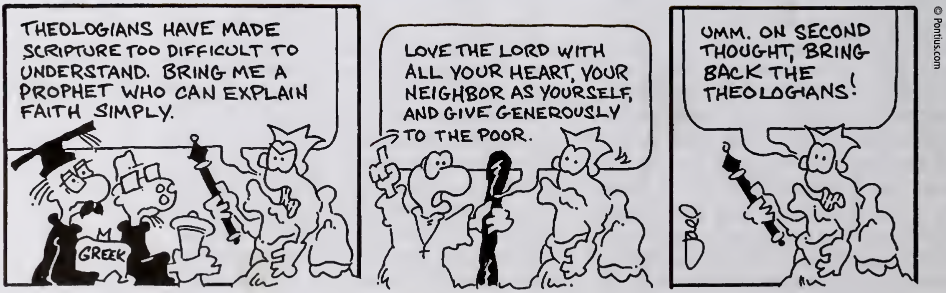
In an essay called "The Play Deficit," Gray chronicles the fallout from the loss of the old childhood culture: depression, narcissism and a decline in empathy, "a familiar list of the usual ills attributed to Millennials."

Rosin concludes: "We can no more create the perfect environment for our children than we can create perfect children. To believe otherwise is a delusion, and a harmful one."

Fear breeds fear. Raising children without phobias may require letting them play without parental supervision, letting them experience the thrill of reasonable risks.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


THEOLOGIANS HAVE MADE SCRIPTURE TOO DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND. BRING ME A PROPHET WHO CAN EXPLAIN FAITH SIMPLY.
GREEK
LOVE THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF, AND GIVE GENEROUSLY TO THE POOR.
UMM. ON SECOND THOUGHT, BRING BACK THE THEOLOGIANS!
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—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “If you don’t subscribe to your local paper or pony up to get behind its online paywall, who’s going to pay reporters to cover the news where you live? A free press isn’t that kind of ‘free.’” —*Rachel Maddow in the* Washington Post

The benefit of thanks

“Concrete benefits come to kids who literally count their blessings,” writes Diana Kapp in the *Wall Street Journal*. Research shows that teens who had learned to be grateful had better grades, less depression and envy, and a more positive outlook that paid off in numerous ways. According to one study, jotting down three things to feel grateful for boosted well-being as much as an hour of therapy. Couples who kept gratitude journals experienced a measurable positive change in how they perceived their partners. Those same journals also boosted resilience and helped people bounce back from physical and workplace setbacks.—*The Marketplace*

2%
of counties in the United States are responsible for all death sentences.
—*New York Times*

A nation of ‘takers’

In his March 26 column, Nicholas Kristof names five public welfare programs that are wasteful and turning us into a nation of “takers.”

1. Welfare subsidies for private planes. The United States offers three kinds of subsidies to tycoons with private jets: accelerated tax writeoffs, avoidance of personal taxes on the benefit by claiming that private aircraft are for security, and use of air traffic control paid for by chumps flying commercial.

2. Welfare subsidies for yachts. The mortgage-interest deduction was meant to encourage a home-owning middle class. But it has been extended to provide subsidies for beach homes and even yachts. In the meantime, money was slashed last year from the public housing program for America’s neediest.

3. Welfare subsidies for hedge funds and private equity. The single most outrageous tax loophole in America is for “carried interest,” allowing people with the highest earnings to pay paltry taxes. They can magically reclassify their earned income as capital gains, because that carries a lower tax rate (a maximum of 23.8 percent this year, compared with a maximum of 39.6 percent for earned income).

4. Welfare subsidies for America’s biggest banks. The too-big-to-fail banks in the United States borrow money unusually cheaply because of an implicit government promise to rescue them. Bloomberg View calculated last year that this amounts to a taxpayer subsidy of $83 billion to our 10 biggest banks annually.

5. Large welfare subsidies for American corporations from cities, counties and states. A bit more than a year ago, Louise Story of *The New York Times* tallied more than $80 billion a year in subsidies to companies, mostly as incentives to operate locally.—*New York Times*

34%
of millennials watch mostly online video or no broadcast television.

13%
of Americans got most of their news about national and international issues from the Internet in 2001.

41%
of Americans got most of their news about national and international issues from the Internet in 2010.

41%
of Americans had read a newspaper in the past 24 hours in 2002.

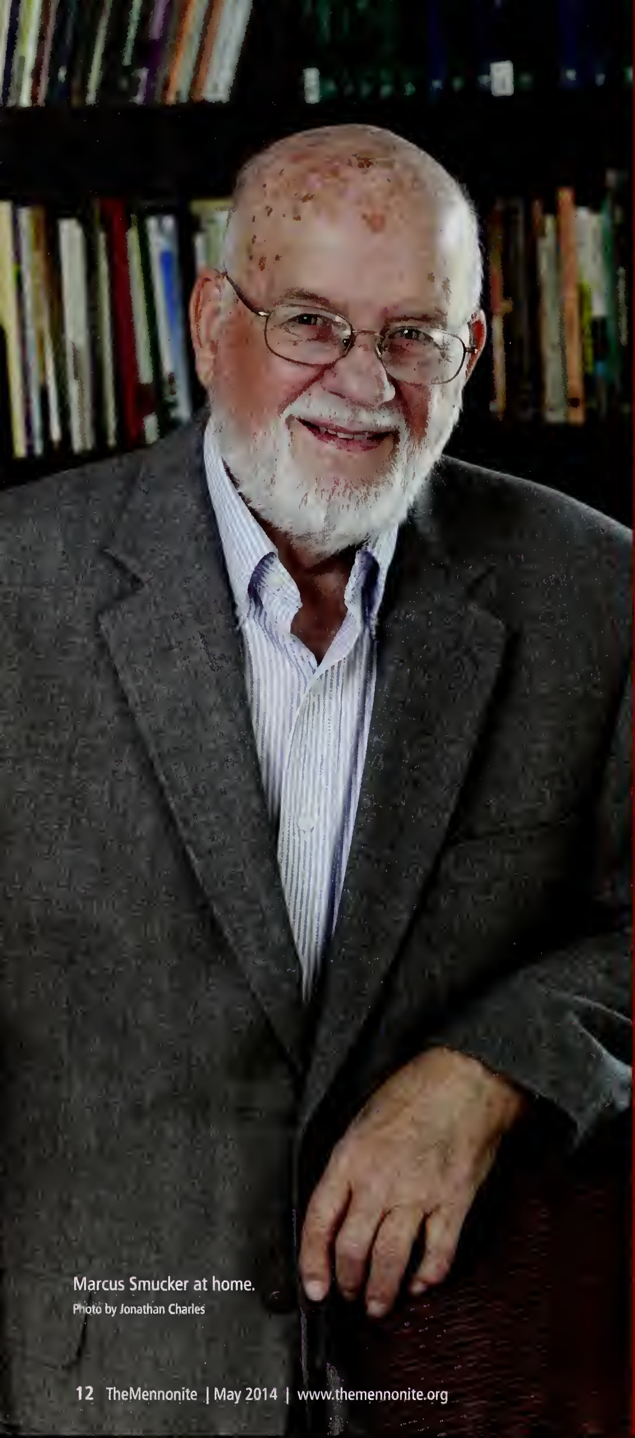
23%
of Americans had read a newspaper in the past 24 hours in 2012.
—*Columbia Journalism Review*

By age 23,

49 percent of black men in the United States have been arrested, “which can hurt their ability to find work, go to school and participate fully in their communities,” a new study in the journal *Crime & Delinquency* found. By age 23, 44 percent of Hispanic males and 38 percent of white males have been arrested.—*The Week*

Numbers to ponder

- Percentage change in the past 25 years in the net worth of Americans 65 and older: 42
- Percentage change in the past 25 years in the net worth of Americans 35 and younger: 68
- Number of college graduates working as astronomers, physicists, chemists, mathematicians or web developers: 216,000
- Number of college graduates working as waiters and bartenders: 216,000
- Estimated portion of sexually explicit text messages that are sent to the wrong number: 1/10
- Average number of times each week U.S. surgeons operate on the wrong patient or body part: 40
- Percentage of white live-in fathers who help their children with their homework daily: 20
- Of black live-in fathers who do: 41
- Percentage of black male teenagers who don’t have a job: 85—*Harper’s*


Marcus Smucker at home.
Photo by Jonathan Charles

Pastor, teacher, spiritual director

Marcus Smucker has served congregations and pastors in gaining a more vital experience of God's presence.

by Sue Conrad Howes

An eighth-grade education, Amish faith, and farm chores don't usually lead to urban ministry, a Ph.D. in spirituality and expertise as a church conflict mediator, but Marcus Smucker is far from what one expects. In fact, even he is surprised at where his life has led.

Now retired and living at Landis Homes in Lititz, Pa., he has come full circle in some ways, having just moved from his family farm in Bird-in-Hand, Pa., where he first lived as a child with three older brothers and three younger sisters. His father, a farmer, left the Amish church just before Smucker's birth, but his mother remained Amish, creating tension in the household and within the broader family. Perhaps Smucker was destined to study family systems and relationships and use that knowledge as a church consultant, though he never imagined his childhood years as helpful at the time.

Uninterested in farming and the youngest of the boys, Smucker had hand-me-down clothes and hand-me-down chores, which did not increase his love of farm life. When his father died at age 45, Smucker was just 12. After completing eighth grade, he wanted to attend Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite High School. However, his mother urged him to stay home, saying she needed him on the farm. But his desire for more education never left him.

Sadly, death was not something new to Smucker, even at age 12. He had already experienced the death of his maternal grandmother, who lived with his family six years prior to her death. Losing two significant people by age 12 left its mark. It sensitized Smucker to suffering, loss and death, making a powerful impact on his long career in pastoral care and counseling.

Smucker suffered intense anxiety and fear as a teenager, for reasons that he never fully understood. He struggled with sleeplessness and confusion as he grappled with feeling uncomfortable with the world around him. Although he was baptized at age 15 in a Beachy Amish church, he didn't feel much different or experience any sense of comfort from the baptism. Three years later, he joined Maple Grove Mennonite Church in Atglen, Pa.

At age 18, the transformation from Amish to urban began. He had no idea what to expect when he left the farm to spend nine months in voluntary service (VS) in Hannibal, Mo. His life changed. Hannibal may not be considered urban, but for this Amish farm boy, the chance to get off the farm felt like a whole new world.

After VS, Smucker returned to the family farm, and in 1953, at age 21, he was drafted. As a conscientious objector, he had the option of returning to Hannibal to work in a hospital or going to Germany to work with PAX. "There was always an adventuresomeness in me that I didn't recognize for some time," he says. While his time in Hannibal was enjoyable and affirming, he chose to go to Backnang, Germany, to build houses for refugees. Eventually he was asked to served as the unit leader.

"It was different for me that anyone would ask me to be a leader," says Smucker. "[Before PAX] I had never recognized that in me. Becoming a leader in Germany really blindsided me and opened me up to seeing something in myself."

Because of his knowledge of Pennsylvania Dutch, Smucker easily learned the German language and developed a strong, lifelong interest in the Russian Mennonite refugee experience. Partway through his two years in PAX, he moved to Berlin to serve as an interim leader at Mennoheim, a temporary home for Mennonite refugees.

Returning to the United States in 1955, Smucker knew he didn't want to be on the farm, so he earned his GED and enrolled at Eastern Mennonite College in Harrisonburg, Va. Never having had math or science beyond an eighth-grade level, he says, "[college] almost did me in." His lack of educational preparation made college difficult at times, but fortunately, he excelled in the social sciences, and he stayed in school. He took a few semesters off to help with a family business when his brother died unexpectedly at age 31. Smucker graduated from EMC in 1960 with a degree in Bible and history.

Becoming a leader in Germany really blindsided me and opened me up to seeing something in myself.

Smucker taught history for a year at Belleville (Pa.) Mennonite High School, then went to seminary. "I wanted to attend a non-Mennonite school," he says, so he studied at New York Theological Seminary from 1960 to 1963. It was in New York City that he met a Mennonite woman, Dottie Wenger, from Newport News, Va., who also moved to New York for some adventure. Dottie and her love was a new experience for Smucker.

"During my teen and young adult years, I wasn't able to have strong friendships. There weren't any deep connections. Dottie was my first experience of being loved and accepted and wanted. I know that my mother loved me, but I didn't feel it. I felt like I was put up with. Dottie was my first experience of someone saying to me, 'I like you. I love you. I want to be with you.' Being valued and enjoyed for who you are is a profound thing. I have often struggled with the question, Am I valued for what I do or because of who I am? It has been an undertone in my life."

The couple met in 1960 and married later that year, and their son Greg was born just over a year later. Even at age 29, Smucker admits he probably wasn't ready for marriage because "I had so much unfinished business. We had to work at growing together in our marriage. We had many struggles, but when I go to bed each night, I thank God for Dottie." Receiving and accepting Dottie's love also helped Smucker understand God's unconditional love for him.

I realized that in order to continue to be open to God, I also had to continue to keep facing myself and keep becoming self-aware.
—Marcus Smucker

After seminary, Smucker and his new family moved to Portland, Ore., where he became pastor of Portland Mennonite Church. "Portland was where I found myself in a new way," he says. Feeling respected as a pastor, he continued studying counseling and developed a significant counseling ministry in the church. It was during a sabbatical, studying for a Th.M. degree in pastoral counseling, that Smucker realized how much anger he had brewing within him. "I could have gone a totally different direction had I not sought counseling for myself."

Early in his time with the congregation, he came to understand the power he possessed as a pastor. One day, a church lay leader asked, "Are you aware there are people in the church who are afraid to talk with you if they disagree with you?" Smucker was shocked. For the first time in his life, he had to really think about power. "As a middle child growing up, I never had authority, but now I had to realize I did. I was emotional, educated, relational, male and articulate. I wanted to learn how to live with power so that I empowered people rather than lording it over others. One of the most important lessons I had to learn was how to live powerfully with both strength and vulnerability."

Marcus age 21. Photo provided

Using power effectively has been a lifelong goal of Smucker's and led him to study conflict mediation. "When I realized I had power, I had to learn to feel comfortable using it ... and also know when not to use it. There is very little I will run from," he says. "I will stand up to it, and I can be quite intentionally powerful at points, but I always try to do it with respect so that the person does not feel overpowered." As a result of his reflections, Smucker began to embrace conflict. "I had to learn not to be afraid of conflict. Conflict is always an invitation to something new, it doesn't always get there, but it's an invitation."

While attending Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Va., to pursue further studies in pastoral counseling, he met Dr. William Ogelsby. "I owe a lot of who I have become to one of my professors, Dr. Ogelsby. He was the one who recognized that I was full of rage, and he was not afraid of it. With Dr. Ogelsby, I felt respected, but I knew he also saw me clearly." Smucker's studies in conflict mediation and family systems opened up new relationships for him with his family of origin.

However, at age 42, Smucker found himself burned out. For months, it was hard to preach, hard to pray and thus hard to do his job. Portland Mennonite gave him time off for renewal. Among other things he went to a cabin alone for a few days in Mount Hood Forest. "I met God there in a way that was both reassuring and disturbing. I realized that in order to continue to be open to God, I also had to continue to keep facing myself and keep becoming self-aware. From then on, it was more about opening myself to God rather than just searching out God. It has been a tremendous relief. It was then that I began to study and experience God through contemplative prayer and spirituality. I became increasingly aware of how God had been working in my life through all these years. Romans 8:28 took on new meaning for me."

Smucker took his newfound interest back to Portland Mennonite Church. In the late 1960s, he began to co-teach with a young lay leader, Marlene Kropf, in the area of Christian spirituality. While Smucker reflects on this time of collaboration with Kropf as one of the most powerful things he has done, Kropf acknowledges the profound influence Smucker had on her and the broader church. "I believe Marcus' greatest contribution to the church, beyond mentoring hundreds of leaders, was his passionate commitment to integrate early Anabaptist spiritual understandings with contemplative spiritual practices. He forged a path of spiritual integrity for many who longed for a more vital experience of God's presence—not only in prayer but in lives of justice and service," says Kropf.

While pastoring at Portland Mennonite Church, Smucker served on the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary board, and Marlin Miller, AMBS president, invited Smucker to share his work in spirituality at AMBS. The Smucker family (now including daughter Deb) moved to Elkhart, Ind., in 1979, and Smucker began Ph.D. work in religious and psychological studies at The Union Institute and began teaching part-time at AMBS in 1982. With Marlene Kropf and others, Smucker pioneered a degree program in Christian formation and spiritual direction at AMBS.

In 1998, Marcus and Dottie decided it was time to leave Elkhart. While Marcus never had any intention of moving back to Lancaster County, that was where they ended up. "When we moved back to Pennsylvania at age 67, I remember saying, What in the world will I do with the rest of my life?" Soon after their return, Smucker was asked to help develop spirituality in a Lancaster Conference leadership program. Since moving to Lancaster County for "retirement," Smucker has taught courses for Eastern Mennonite Seminary Lancaster campus, Kairos School of Spiritual Formation and led mediation and consulting in congregations.

In his retirement years, Smucker has made family relationships a priority. Being a grandfather has been a profound experience for him. Through his experience of love and enjoyment of his grandchildren he came to new levels of awareness of God's love for him. "Even as I enjoy them and love them unconditionally, so God also loves me."

In his older years, teaching and providing spiritual direction have become the capstone of Smucker's life. "Being able to continue to share what I have learned and to learn about God, myself, ministry and life has been profound. It has offered me the opportunity to see life and the church through the eyes of younger generations."

Marcus and Dottie, his wife. Photo by Jonathan Charles

Serving congregations and pastors has been Smucker's life vocation. Sometimes when the church seems to struggle for vitality and is caught up in so much disagreement and conflict, he can feel disappointment. "Nevertheless," he says, "I believe the church has been created to be one expression of God in the world and that God is willing to work with our mess. God became incarnate in the world to keep breaking through and working with us in all our messes. God is willing to work with a mess."

He forged a path of spiritual integrity for many who longed for a more vital experience of God's presence—not only in prayer but in lives of justice and service.
—Marlene Kropf

As he looks back on his life, Smucker reflects on his legacy as pastor, teacher and spiritual director. "I feel grateful for my life and the opportunities I've had. As for a legacy, I suppose it's that I have sought to be faithful to God in ministry and to speak the truth with God, myself and others."

Sue Conrad Howes is an ordained minister in Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference.

From **tragedy** to **apocalypse**

Why we can be hopeful about the future of the church

by John D. Roth

In classical Greek tragedy, the driving force of the story often hinges on a conflict between two incompatible moral obligations. Both obligations seem equally compelling, yet they are fundamentally irreconcilable with each other. In "Antigone," for example, a play by the poet Sophocles, the lead character commits a capital crime by honoring her brother, Oedipus, with a proper funeral despite the fact that the king has declared him to be a traitor and therefore unworthy of a burial. Should Antigone obey the law of the land, or does she have a deeper obligation to her family?

wikimedia.org

Once the moral conflict becomes clear, the characters in a Greek tragedy are locked into an unfolding story line whose only possible outcome is an agonizing, irresolvable moral conflict—in other words, a tragedy.

There are times when it feels like Mennonite Church USA is in the midst of just such a drama. For some, the question of full LGBT inclusion in the church—be it marriage or ordination—is the civil rights issue of our day. If the church cannot extend love, compassion and full acceptance to LGBT individuals, it denies the gospel and becomes complicit with the mean-spirited, fear-driven bigotry of the larger culture.

For others in the church, the pressure to redefine marriage and traditional sexual ethics, especially in the larger context of the sexual revolution, has become the bright-line test of biblical authority. Yielding on this point feels like a capitulation to disordered desire—an ethics based on personal experience and the idolatry of western individualism.

An apocalyptic reading of this moment in the history of Mennonite Church USA calls for the discerning insights of many.

In light of the conflicting trajectories of various Mennonite conferences, the passion of convictions expressed in social media and the painful experiences of other denominations who have attempted to resolve this issue, it would be easy to conclude that we have become actors in a Greek tragedy. All that remains now is for each of us to play out our roles, following with earnest conviction the logic of our own moral obligations. But the outcome—a future of anguish, Pyrrhic victories, resignation and division—is not really in doubt.

As a historian of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition and a person committed to the unity of the church, I struggle almost every day with the temptation to read our current circumstances through the lens of tragedy. Yet as a Christian, I know better. For Christians, the appropriate lens for interpreting our times is not tragedy but apocalypse.

Though we generally associate the word "apocalypse" with end-time scenarios of destruction, the more appropriate meaning of the term is "revelation" or "disclosure of something that is hidden." In the biblical tradition, the book of Revelation is sometimes called the Apocalypse of John. At a time when Christians were facing the overwhelming and brutal force of Roman imperial power, John offered an alternative lens for interpreting the times. His "revelation" made it clear that despite all visible evidence to the contrary, God was ultimately in control of human history. Though the immediate experience seemed otherwise, John recognized that history was moving toward a day when the rough places would be made plain, the lamb would lie down with the lion, and people from every tribe and nation would gather around the throne of God, joining their voices in praise.

> The church's authority ultimately rests on our testimonies of healing, the transparency of honest confession, the practices of hospitality and the daily rhythms of repentance and transformation in response to God's grace.

To read history apocalyptically rather than tragically is a spiritual discipline. Like all spiritual disciplines, it begins as an act of will—a conscious decision that gets easier with practice as we become more attentive to the presence of the Spirit and the patient providence of God in human history.

An apocalyptic reading of this moment in the history of Mennonite Church USA calls for the discerning insights of many. So what follows is only a provisional beginning, a few thoughts that have emerged for me in my personal quest to resist the seduction of tragedy.

First, an apocalyptic perspective recognize that the Spirit is often present precisely when we are most vulnerable. At one level, w know that vulnerability—particularly within the covenant of marriage or a trusting group of friends—is a path to intimacy and joy. Yet we often avoid vulnerability at all costs. Especially in times of cultural upheaval, the absolute certainty of conviction—on either side of the issue—provides a welcome sense of security. Yet our tradition is littered with the wreckage of well-intende groups whose moral clarity led to endless fragmentation and division; or, at the other extreme, with groups who sought to resolve conflict by retreating to the safety of spiritualism and the invisible church and simply disappeared from history altogether. If a tragic perspective on the future offers the security of predetermined outcome, an apocalyptic perspective calls us to live into the vulnerability of the unknown, trusting that the Spirit can work in ways that none of us can fully anticipate.

Second, an apocalyptic perspective on this moment in our history reminds us that the God we worship is not coercive. The gospel invites, but it does not compel. For those of us in the free church tradition, this means that the decision to remain in fellowship with other Christians like the decision to follow Jesus, is voluntary. The authority the church, and the basis for our unity, i anchored not in our structures or policies—important though they are. Rather, the church's authority ultimately rests on our testimonies of healing, the transparency of honest confession, the practices of hospitality and the daily rhythms of repentance and transformation in response to the gift of God's grace. This commitment to a noncoercive testimony does not mean that we back away from the clarity or depth of our convictions. But it does suggest that we hold those convictions with a posture of gentle intensity; that w pursue Truth with humility; that we hunger for God's righteousness first and foremost in our ow life; and that irresolvable disagreements end in a spirit of lament and confession rather than anger.

Finally, an apocalyptic perspective recognizes that throughout history, the body of Christ has taken on many different expres-

sions. For most of the 20th century, the Mennonite church in North America organized itself in congregations that related to the denomination through membership in a local conference or district. The denominational institutions that emerged helped congregations support the work and witness of the larger church in areas like education, mutual aid, publications, missions, service and relief projects. In recent decades, support for those institutions has waned. In the face of these changes, it is tempting for some of us to anxiously defend those structures or the particularity of our identity, confusing a particular model of being the church with the kingdom of God. But the opposite impulse—retreating to the local congregation, ignoring the accountability of a collective witness, rejecting all structures and boundaries—suggests an idolatry of a different sort. So we live, apocalyptically, in the dynamic tension of the Incarnation.

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of Mennonite Quarterly Review.

Planting sequoias

On a family vacation many years ago, we visited Sequoia National Park. In rapt silence, dwarfed by the towering sequoias, we gazed in awe at the majestic forest. Some of the trees, already ancient at the time of Christ, were more than 300 feet high and measured 60 feet in diameter. Through the centuries, they have survived earthquakes, forest fires and the spread of human civilization. Each year, their massive trunks steadily add one more tiny ring of growth.

Not long thereafter, we encountered a former student of mine who was working for the National Parks Service. Not long ago, he said he had spent several weeks planting sequoias—digging holes for tiny seedlings, barely more than sticks, in the hope they would take root. Those images—of the ancient, towering, mature trees and the simple repeated act of planting a tiny sequoia sprig—have lingered with me ever since.

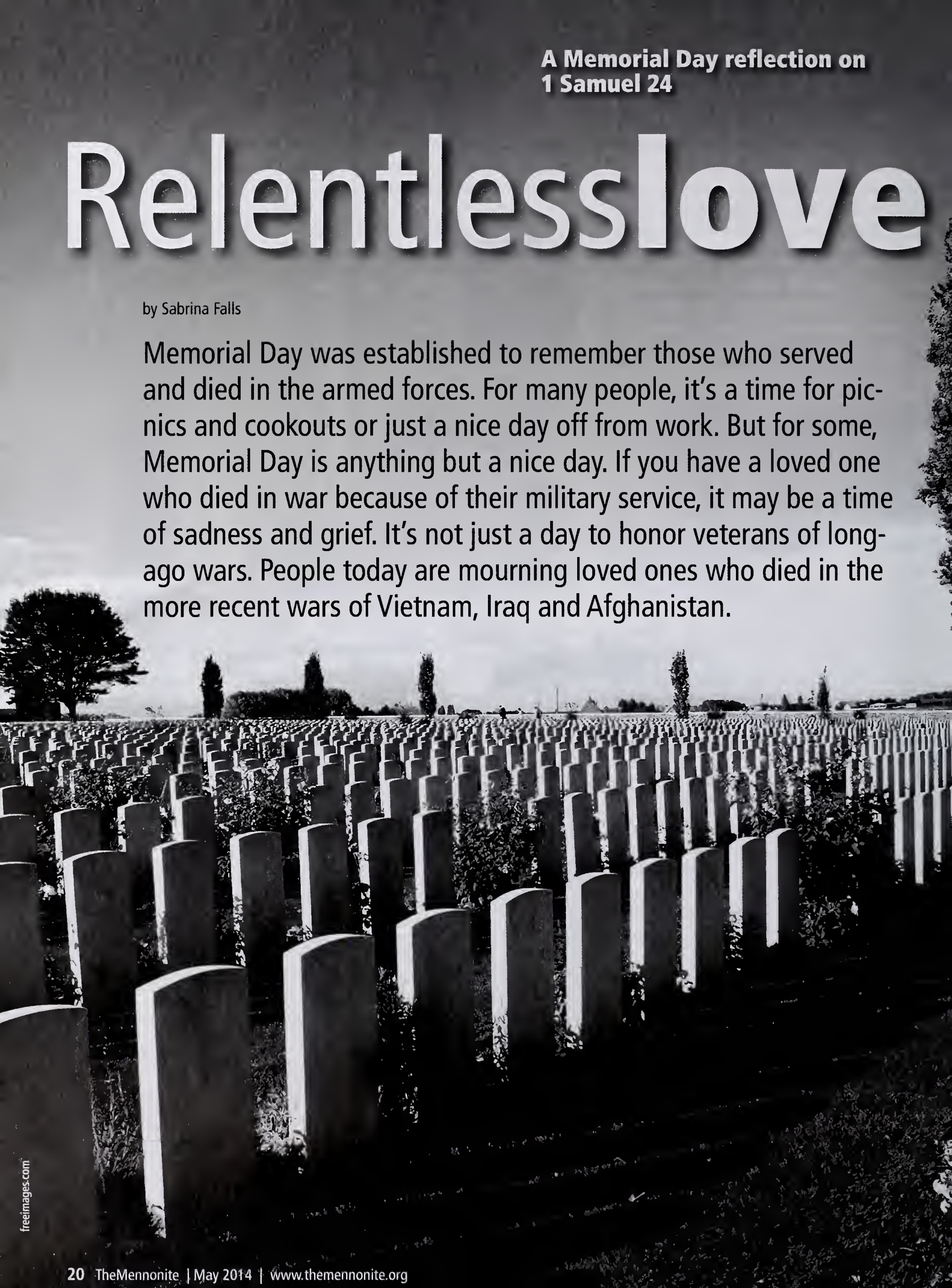
An apocalyptic view of the church calls each of us to take the audacious step of planting a sequoia—to make some small, risky, impossible gesture of hope in the knowledge that it may take decades, maybe even centuries, for that gesture to flourish and bear fruit. Yet we do so—we participate in small acts of planting, watering, pruning or nurturing—in the confidence that God is capable of making something majestic and beautiful out of our weak efforts.—*John D. Roth*

A Memorial Day reflection on 1 Samuel 24

Relentless love

by Sabrina Falls

Memorial Day was established to remember those who served and died in the armed forces. For many people, it's a time for picnics and cookouts or just a nice day off from work. But for some, Memorial Day is anything but a nice day. If you have a loved one who died in war because of their military service, it may be a time of sadness and grief. It's not just a day to honor veterans of long-ago wars. People today are mourning loved ones who died in the more recent wars of Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan.



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Some of us are mourning everyone who has died in war, not only those who were in the military. It's a time to reflect once again on the cost of violent conflict. It's a time to be reminded of the higher, better way God would have us resolve our conflicts.

Will there always be battles to fight? Is war inevitable? Are hatred and revenge built into our very being? Will we always have enemies?

When faced with these basic questions and dilemmas, we turn to the Word of God. When I think of the paradox of human nature—how we can feel and exhibit both such great love and such base brutality—I think of one of my favorite people in the Bible: David.

The one known as the shepherd boy and healing harpist—who wrote the beautiful Psalms we so often turn to in prayer and worship—was also the one who slew Goliath, had victory over the insidious Philistines and as the second king of Israel was able to unite its long-bickering tribes. He did not achieve all this without fighting many bloody battles. Many died at his hands.

Some may be uncomfortable looking to David as an example of how to behave. But even as much as the Bible spins his story to glorify and establish his kingdom, it also doesn't shy away from showing his flaws and weaknesses.

We only have to read his Psalms to learn the depth of his despair over his darkness and sinfulness and betrayal of God. Or the stories of how he handles some of the temptations and conflicts he faced. He didn't always pass the morality test.

But in 1 Samuel 24, we see the David we aspire to be—perhaps the David in whom God saw king potential when no one else could, seeing not the outward appearance as people do, but looking instead upon the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

Let's review chapter 24, a vignette from David's long saga of battles, both physical and spiritual. It begins with Saul, the first king of Israel, returning from yet another battle with the Philistines.

Who are these Philistines? They seem to pop up everywhere in the Hebrew Bible. That's because they are everywhere, a constant threat to the Israelites.

They first appeared around the end of the 13th century B.C. and came to Canaan by land and ship, destroying many nations along the way. Their great success and power may have had something to do with their mastery of the technology of iron. In the book of Judges, we read about the constant clashes between them and Israel and their dominance over the Israelite tribes and the entire Canaanite region.

Earlier in 1 Samuel is the story of the battle at Ebenezer, when the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant and destroyed the holy shrine at Shiloh, where Samuel himself first heard the voice of God calling him as a child and where he was raised by the high priest Eli.

In short, the Philistines were relentless. They are perhaps the main reason the Israelites demanded a king to lead them in war and finally rid themselves of this plague. The result of this was the anointing of Saul as the first king of Israel. And from day one of his reign until his last day, Saul fought the Philistines.

So as our story begins, it's just "another day, another battle with the Philistines."

Except for one other thing—Saul's relentless pursuit of David. Who knows, maybe Saul would have had quicker success against the Philistines if he focused more on defeating them and less on defeating David. The shepherd boy who soothed him with harp music when he was sick and ill-tempered, the beloved best friend of his son Jonathan, was enemy #1 to him.

Is war inevitable? Are hatred and revenge built into our very being? Will we always have enemies?

Even worse than the Philistines was David's ability to have success over them. Whenever David fought them—from that first encounter with Goliath through various other battles—he had so many victories that Saul became jealous. All he could see in David was someone who made him look weak and ineffective and unworthy to be king. It seemed his life's mission was more to defeat David than the Philistines.

Now he's back from another battle with the Philistines, and his men inform him that David is in the wilderness of Engedi. David is hiding out, because he knows Saul is after him, and he lives as a fugitive even though he hasn't done anything wrong. Saul, as if he were about to go back to war with the Philistines, gathers 300 of his best men and goes hunting for David.

▶

Along the way, he needs a break and goes into a cave. He doesn't know that David and his men are hiding inside that very cave. While Saul is there, David's men are getting all excited and tell David: "This is the day God is saying to you, I've delivered your enemy into your hand and you'll do to him what seems good to you."

In the darkness of the cave, David slithers over to Saul, snips off a corner of his robe and slithers back to his men. And you can imagine his men. You have to figure they're dumbfounded. What just happened here? You could have been rid of this guy. You could have been free of this constant threat against your life. You could stop hiding in caves and hills and valleys and start living your life.

He didn't kill Saul, but it was killing him inside that he would even ever-so-slightly disrespect 'the Lord's anointed.'

But no. In the stricken silence, David is already brooding. Yes, this is the character we know from the Psalms he writes later, the one who feels everything and overthinks everything.

The Bible tells us that after he cut off the piece of Saul's robe—didn't kill him, just snipped some robe—"his heart smote him."

Some translations have it—"he was stricken to the heart" (NRSV) or, "he was conscience-stricken" (NIV). One translation (CEV) says, "David was sorry" for what he'd done.

That doesn't cut it. The original Hebrew has it much stronger, much more deeply-felt. David's "heart smote him." He didn't kill Saul, but it was killing him inside that he would even ever-so-slightly disrespect "the Lord's anointed."

Keep in mind that in biblical Hebrew, the word "heart" ("lev") means not only the physical organ or even just one's emotions but also one's mind and personality and courage. All these are rising up to slay him because he would even come close to slaying God's anointed one. And yes, the word for anointed one here, meaning the one chosen by God to be anointed king, is the same word used for the "messiah" ("mashiach").

After Saul leaves the cave, David goes out after him. After all his hiding, he's suddenly so brave, running out into broad daylight and revealing himself to anyone who might be out there—including Saul's troops.

But all we see is the encounter between these two men. We can almost imagine there's no one else around. David calls Saul—not by name but with great respect—lord and king. And when Saul turns and sees him, David prostrates before him on the ground. This is a humble, vulnerable position to be in at any time, let alone now.

Then he says, "Why do you listen when people say I want to harm you? Today your eyes have seen how God gave you into my hand. Others urged me to kill you, and I could have—but I spared you. And I said, I won't raise my hand against him, because he is Yahweh's anointed one."

And we can feel the depth of his feelings even more as he continues: "See, my father. See, the corner of your robe in my hands. This is proof that I would never betray you. I've never sinned against you, even though you're hunting me, even though you'll stop at nothing to take my life."

Then he makes his case: "May Yahweh avenge me. May Yahweh plead my case and be the judge and give the sentence and vindicate me. But my hand won't be against you."

For me, this is one of the most brutally honest and heart-wrenching scenes in the Bible. I can see David and Saul standing there, facing each other, or maybe David is still on the ground and crying out to this man he loves like a father. And with tears streaming down his face he's asking, "Why do you listen to these lies? How can you believe that I'd ever think of killing you?"

And Saul, moved to tears and reaching out to this man he loves like a son, cries, "Is that your voice, my son David? You are more righteous than I, doing good to me when I've done evil to you. When a man finds his enemy, does he let him go away unharmed? Who does that?"

And Saul asks God to reward David for this act of incredible mercy.

Then Saul affirms David's calling to become king and only asks that David not cut off his descendants or wipe out his name, and David promises him.

And they live happily ever after.

Unfortunately not. I wish I could say that, but the fact is, just two chapters later (1 Samuel 26), the same thing happens. Saul is back at it again—hunting him down—and David nearby with yet another opportunity to sneak into his camp while

Saul's asleep and kill him. And again he refuses to do it because he's the Lord's anointed. And again he turns it over to God, saying, "God himself will strike Saul. But God forbid that I should lay a hand on him."

Saul finds out again and is again filled with remorse and asks God to bless his son David. But really, the search for David never ends, and he continues relentlessly to seek David's life until his own life ends fighting ... the Philistines.

This brings us back to Memorial Day and the act of remembering—year after year—those who have fallen in battle and the fact that, despite all the misery and anguish and grief and loss and destruction of war, no war was ever miserable or agonizing or cruel or destructive enough to end all wars.

It seems relentless. The Philistines are relentless. The Sauls are relentless. Jealousy is relentless. Greed is relentless. Pride is relentless. Lies are relentless. Misunderstanding is relentless. Miscommunication is relentless. Desire for revenge is relentless. Desire for power is relentless.

One is tempted to throw up one's hands and say it's hopeless. But our enemies within are much fiercer than our enemies without. Much more powerful than any nation or despot or terrorist or criminal are the enemies in our hearts and minds. And how we respond to the enemies within will likely reflect and determine how we respond to the enemies without.

Much more powerful than any nation or despot or terrorist or criminal are the enemies in our hearts and minds.

When I say we, I mean each of us individually facing our personal demons and those we regard as our enemies in life as well as all of us collectively as this nation we call the United States.

Whether speaking of ourselves as individuals or as a nation, I want to ask, What if we were to take some cues from David? The first cue we might take is to fight God's battles. It is said on several occasions in Scripture that David fights God's battles, not his own (1 Samuel 17:47, 25:28).

What if, like David, we turned the whole battle-fighting thing over to God? When faced with the temptation and the opportunity to kill—even for a righteous cause—David leaves it to God to decide if, when and how to take action.

Can you imagine what would happen if we—and our government—always first asked, "Whose battle are we fighting? Is this God's battle or mine?"

A second cue we might take from David is to pay attention to the state of our hearts. What if we—and the decision-makers of our society—felt slain by our hearts whenever we treated another disrespectfully? Jesus said, "Anyone who is angry with a sister or brother will be subject to judgment. Anyone who insults a sister or brother will be taken to court. And anyone who says 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fires of hell" (Matthew 5:22).

We've got to yield our lives, our actions, our decisions—even our thoughts and feelings, minds and hearts—to God.

Can you imagine what would happen if we—and our government—always first felt violated and victimized and stricken when we so much as treated others unkindly, let alone harmed or killed them?

A third cue we might take from David, as Saul himself so eloquently stated, is to do good to those who do evil to us. Paul wrote: "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. … Do not take revenge. … Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:17, 19, 21). Instead we are to feed our enemies if they're hungry, give them a drink if thirsty.

Can you imagine living in the upside-down kingdom where, instead of an eye for an eye, we were always to first love our enemies?

A fourth cue we might take from David is to see "that of God in every person." What if, like David, we were always to first ask, "Is he or she the anointed of the Lord?" We know that each person is a beloved child of God, chosen and cherished by his or her Creator. Before we—or our armed representatives—lift a hand or aim a weapon at anyone, we might first say, like David, "I can't do this. This is the Lord's anointed."

Can you imagine lifting a hand against the "mashiach"—against Christ—himself?

Yes, the Philistines are relentless. The enemy will always be with us. But as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against … the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil" (Ephesians 5:11-12).

Saul was bitterly jealous of David because David had greater success and victory than he over a seemingly insurmountable enemy. Instead of rejoicing in the vanquishing of their common foe, all he could think about was that it was David and not he who was responsible for their defeat.

What he didn't understand was that neither he nor David was responsible for victory over the Philistines. Or that it wasn't even David who was responsible for his dominance over Saul.

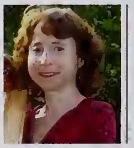
According to the story, David yields his life, his actions, his decisions—even his thoughts and feelings, his mind and heart—to God. This is the only way he is able to see the anointed one of God instead of seeing his archenemy.

And this is the only way things will ever change. This is the only way we will ever stop the insidious, relentless onslaught of the Philistines of this world.

We've got to fight God's battles, not ours. We've got to attend to the state of our hearts and minds. We've got to render good for evil. We've got to see Christ in every child of God.

We've got to yield our lives, our actions, our decisions—even our thoughts and feelings, minds and hearts—to God, putting our trust and faith in Jesus Christ, who alone has the victory over relentless evil and who alone can save us by the power and grace and relentless love of God.

Maybe then Memorial Day will be a time to remember only faraway and long-ago losses. And we can truly rejoice and relax and enjoy our picnics and celebrate with glad hearts the reign of God among us.



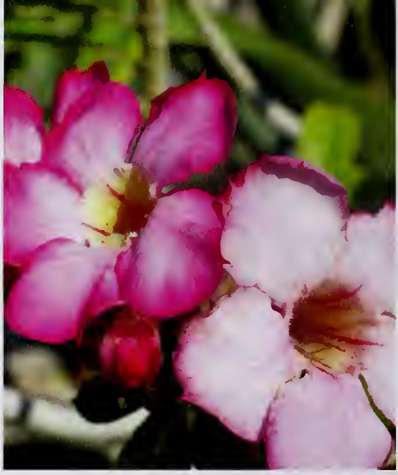
Sabrina Falls is a member of Shalom Mennonite Church in Indianapolis. This article is adapted from a sermon she gave on May 26, 2013.

Wounded and wounding words

God forgives our wounding others and our wounds from others

by Ted Lewis

One of the wisest statements about human nature I have ever heard came from a seventh-grade girl. I was leading a discussion on bullying prevention with a circle of middle-school students. At one point I asked, "What makes bullies bully?" After a pause, one girl raised her hand. "Bullies bully," she said, "because they've been bullied before, and they don't want to be bullied again." Wow, I thought to myself. ▶



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This insight helped me better understand what I had been observing in my restorative justice work. Many offenders harm others out of the unhealed energy of their past pain. When confronted with the truth of their actions, their default reaction is usually to protect themselves. Why is that? Deep down, they do not want to be vulnerable or, better, they do not want to be vulnerable again.

> We all experience hurts; we all hurt others. It is part of being human.

We've all had small bleeding injuries on our hands from camping or gardening and because we may not be able to cover the wound and keep the dirt out, it gets infected. A day or two later, the wound is more sensitive to the touch; every bump hurts even more than the initial injury. Consequently, it takes several more days for it to heal well, assuming we help it heal. In many ways, this is a picture of how our relational wounds can last over time.

Whenever I meet with offenders in preparation for a dialogue with victims, it is common for them to protect themselves. They feel bad about what they've done, and deep down they feel hurt by wounds from their past. I'm always amazed how they let down their guard when they are treated with dignity and respect. This transition toward openness is important for them to eventually make amends and for them to heal some of the ongoing infection that is tied to their negative choices.

I've also worked with victims at the front end of a dialogue process, watching them similarly move from a protective place to an open place. Rebuilding trust is central. These facilitation experiences have led me to a new conclusion: All of us, at some level, have victim and offender aspects within ourselves. We all experience hurts; we all hurt others. It is part of being human. Below the thresholds of criminal law, all of us have an inner victim and an inner offender.

In my reflections I have also come to see that Jesus provides a powerful way for us to find healing and forgiveness not only for our wounding side but also for our wounded side. In his death, he experienced what both offenders and victims experience. The reconciliation that flows from the cross happens at many profound levels, and the level I want to focus on is between our wounded side and our wounding side.

The two Hagar stories in Genesis have become for me a window into seeing how one person can be both victim and offender. These stories, each with the same two-scene structure, show the complexities of relational conflict as wel as the spiritual aspect of relational healing. Scene One involves the escalating tensions between Hagar, Sarah and Abraham. Scene Two involves Hagar in the wilderness and her encounters with God.

Hagar clearly bears the brunt of Sarah and Abraham's anxieties and lack of trust about being

childless, but she is also not innocent in the whole affair. We read in Genesis 16 that after Hagar knew she was pregnant, she despised Sarah. Out of deep pain, Sarah is stirred by this negative energy and overreacts in two ways: She blames Abraham and she projects her negativity back onto Hagar. Abraham (in this interesting study of family systems) is passive. Sarah's inner turmoil turns into abuse toward Hagar, and Hagar flees into the desert.

I want to note here that when Hagar flees, she is not only feeling hurt but likely feeling some personal shame for adding to the escalating tensions. This is a picture of how all of us, at times, are not just a victim or not just an offender but more often a combination of the two. Some months ago, I lost a job in an unfortunate situation where I felt hurt by others as well as shame for my part in the issues. This dynamic can make healing and resolution a more challenging process.

It is significant that Hagar, fully pregnant, finds a spring in the wilderness. She has enough esteem to tend to her own care. Next, we learn that God reaches out, engaging Hagar in therapeutic conversation. In brief, God emboldens Hagar to return to her family system and transcend the hardships, knowing she will bear a son that will have many descendants. Her son is to be called Ishmael, meaning "God hears" the one in misery.

We may think relational healing must involve all parties finding a way to sit down and talk things through. That is not always possible, and it is not always advisable. But here we see how we as individuals, in our spiritual journeys, can have our relational hurts addressed. Hagar, who experienced a kind of invisibility in her role as child provider, now experiences a deity who has seen her. She thus names the spring "Lahai Roi" after the "Living One Who Sees Me."

In the second story, the family system now includes Isaac and Ishmael (Genesis 21). Again, Sarah's negativity, triggered by Ishmael's episode of mocking Isaac, draws the drama into needless escalation, but this time Abraham takes better responsibility in his role. With a more mature faith in God, Abraham sends Hagar and her son into the wilderness; however, they lack sufficient provisions to survive in the desert heat.

The first time she fled; this time she was rejected. Not every close relationship is sustainable. Imagine Hagar's intense mix of emotions. All seems lost, and she begins to sob. The boy will die of thirst. But true to Ishmael's name, God hears the boy crying and again the promise of blessing is pronounced. The first time Hagar found a spring; this time God "opened her eyes," revealing a spring. The spring allows for new life and a new future. Ishmael then lives to father many nations, including today's Arab Muslims.

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Between our hurts and our healing is opportunity for us to receive help and to grow in humility.

These stories have spoken to me during my own time of healing and job transition. They help me see how the entanglement of relational conflicts, sometimes too complicated to untangle, can lead to a resolution that begins with a fresh encounter with God. They also help me see that my wounding side *and* my wounded side can find what I call "parallel healing." If they started together, they can heal together.

As we apply these insights, a four-part framework emerges that can help guide any type of relational problem, whether or not there is good dialogue with another person or other people.

1. Hurts
2. Help
3. Humility
4. Healing

After a situation of conflict or clashing, certain parties will experience ongoing emotional **hurts.** Recall again the illustration of the hand injury that does not get ointment and a band-aid but gets infected. Without receiving **help** from others and without having the **humility** to see the hurts for what they are, one's journey from hurts toward **healing** will be stalled.

Let me return again to restorative dialogue with victims and offenders of crime. A key goal for any facilitator is to prepare both parties to come together for safe, constructive conversation. A good facilitator will have confidence that any face-to-face meeting (which is always voluntary) will result in positive outcomes for everyone. The most straightforward cases—involving one remorseful offender and one empowered victim—go the fastest and smoothest toward resolution.

God has provided a safe, constructive way for us to face the hard truths about ourselves. God pronounces forgiveness for our wounding others and for our wounds from others.

But not all cases are straightforward. Multiple offenders or victims can add complexity. Sometimes a victim, say of an assault, may have been a part of an earlier provocation, making both parties a mix of offender and victim. Even in the dispute resolution cases I've mediated, hurts and regrets can be on both sides. The more complex the clients, the more complex the resolution process.

And what if there is not an opportunity for safe, constructive dialogue with others in your lives, where walls are more prominent than bridges? What then? This is where Hagar's story is helpful. Between our **hurts** and our **healing** is opportunity for us to receive **help** and to grow in **humility.** This can involve some personal work where our own inner offender and inner victim come face-to-face for safe, constructive dialogue.

Once we begin to see that our own woundedness and woundingness are wrapped up in each other's history, energizing each other, as it were, we open ourselves up to new realms of forgiveness and compassion. In my own experience, I had a profound moment of encountering God's forgiveness. As my mind was troubled by sorting out the side of me that felt hurt and the side of m that felt shame, I experienced a new release, knowing that God's forgiveness covers both side

This is where a broader view of Jesus' ministry and death on the cross can help us greatly. He bore not only our sins but also our sorrows; not only our wounding habits but also our wounds. This *bearing of everything that weighs us down* frees us up then to bear the sins of others; we grow in compassion as we understand how their hurting actions stem from deeper, unhealed hurts

Consider the time when Jesus encountered the paralyzed man, forgiving his sins before healing his body. What sins were forgiven? Certainly not sins of greed or violence or indulgence. His sins amounted to the social stigma of being a "bad person" deserving of a physical handicap. Jesus releases him from this weight of sin. Similarly, Jesus' forgiveness for prostitutes is not just for their sinning but for their wounded sinned-uponness.

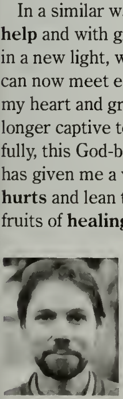
The reconciling work of Jesus, therefore, not only brings peace between God and humanity an by extension, between people as enemies; it also brings peace between an individual's inner victim and inner offender. Having dignified us through divine invitation, God has provided a safe, constructive way for us to face the hard truths about ourselves. God pronounces forgiveness for our wounding others and for our wounds from others

Just as Sarah's past pain was touchy in relation to current rubs, so our past pains are linked to our current sins of hurting others or even hurting ourselves through compulsive addictions. But the cross of Jesus broke the wounded-wounding cycle. That's how the resurrected Jesus could say to Thomas, "Touch my wounds. Experience them as healed wounds." They were not touchy, where Jesus might say, "Ouch." Rather, we touch the wounds to gain Spirit-power for ministries of peacemaking and forgiveness.

A few years ago my teenage daughter told me about being bullied by other high school girls. My first reaction was to find those girls and verbally shake them up so that they would stop. But on further thought, I knew they were complex indi-

viduals who were hurting inside. As bullies, they had once been bullied. I told my daughter, "When you see them again, think about how underneath their insecure actions of bullying is a source of pain. Seeing them that way will give you compassion for them, and you will no longer fear their presence."

In a similar way, I have found that with God's **help** and with greater **humility**, I can see myself in a new light, where my victim and offender sides can now meet each other in the grocery store of my heart and greet each other face-to-face, no longer captive to the energy of avoidance. Thankfully, this God-born compassion and reconciliation has given me a way to lean away from a past of **hurts** and lean toward a future filled with the fruits of **healing**.



Ted Lewis lives in Duluth, Minn., and works as a restorative justice trainer, mediator and consultant for conflict resolution programs and church communities.

'Restorative theology' on the rise

When restorative justice started in the mid-1970s with the help of Mennonites working in the justice system, it was clear that a biblical vision of peacemaking and reconciliation was foundational for this new model. This movement of providing alternative ways for victims and offenders to resolve crimes without punishment and isolation has had immense, worldwide growth since its inception in Ontario and later in Indiana.

Within a decade, Native American and other indigenous groups recognized the affinities between restorative justice and their own traditions. Both seek to repair the harm done for the good of the community. Both understand the power of telling stories in a 're-storing' process. And both recognize how healing conversations enter a sacred zone where apology and forgiveness can happen.

While restorative justice has these religious and spiritual roots, it is only in recent years that one finds a fertile engagement between Christian theology and restorative justice. Specifically, there are now several scholars who write about "restorative theology." They all recognize the rich interplay between the dynamics of restorative practices and biblical themes of atonement and peacemaking.

A major pioneer in this field is Christopher Marshall from New Zealand. Being both an academic theologian and a restorative justice practitioner, Marshall has promoted what he calls a "two-way traffic of ideas" between restorative practices and biblical theology. His three main books are:

- *Beyond Retribution: A New Testament Vision for Crime, Justice and Punishment* (Eerdmans, 2001)
- *The Little Book of Biblical Justice* (Good Books, 2005)
- *Compassionate Justice: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue with Two Gospel Parables on Law, Crime and Restorative Justice* (Cascade Books, 2012).

More recently, Derek Flood has written a book called *Healing the Gospel: A Radical Vision for Grace, Justice, and the Cross* (Cascade Books, 2013), which reformulates all aspects of the death of Christ in the light of an explicit restorative theology. This adds much to traditional debates over atonement, as Flood's comprehensive perspective addresses both our hurting habits and our past hurts.

Michael Gorman, in his book *Inhabiting the Cruciform God* (Eerdmans, 2009), writes about "cruciform justice," where God did not deal with his enemies in retaliation or violence but in reconciliation and love. "That is, God acted with restorative rather than retributive justice." Gorman's book shows how Paul's writings point toward Christian formation into God's nature, and this happens as we participate in the humble, nonviolent pattern revealed in Jesus.

As both restorative theology and the practice of restorative justice find new points of commonality in years to come, it is inevitable that both will be enriched by each other in this growing partnership.—*Ted Lewis*

Own it. Work it. Share it. Be it.

Claire DeBerg is editor of *Timbrel*, the magazine of Mennonite Women USA.

I finally accepted the markers of my leadership prowess this year. There has always been some way in which I experienced the groups around me spread away from me to make space for my leading. But instead of recognizing those experiences as affirmations of my gifts, I chose those moments to feel untouchable.

Here's how it manifested for me as a little girl: I was welcomed as a guest into tight circles of friends but was not considered truly part of any solid group. I was no one's best friend. At sleepovers I was invited as the anomaly—the girl who offered cliques a fierce way of approaching everything from ghost stories (telling scary ones) to nail polish (knowing zero about it) but too powerful to have as an actual friend.

As a teenager, it looked like this for me: I attended a boarding school for the arts, and as a dancer it was a relief to be in an environment welcoming people like me in their pursuit of art. Great divides emerged, and I was not invited into any inner circle mostly because I didn't smoke or break curfew. I was struggling with what it meant to be in relationship with God, and while my peers were impressed with my faith, I was treated (ironically) like a piece of art: Observe but don't approach.

As an adult, choosing to be a single mama gave me a new kind of space to inhabit. I wore my single motherhood like a shiny, extremely heavy necklace, blinding the people around me while simultaneously slowing me down. I was invited to participate in moms circles, but the point of interest I brought was the realities of parenting solo. The wall of partnered mothers would shake their heads concluding they were so glad they weren't me. I was a token attendee.

I realize now that all those scenarios and the feeling of being unwelcome or untouchable had nearly nothing to do with the other people and everything to do with me. I allowed groups to dictate my role instead of harnessing my power myself. I had the power to gather people, to move them to action, to inspire their deepest desires. I was like this raging bonfire: mesmerizing and bright, but get close and eventually I'd burn too hot, turning people away.

Here's what I know now about the steps to take toward being a leader:

Leadership abilities are like muscles: Take them through exercises and they'll grow.

Own it. Owning your gifts as a leader does not look like self-aggrandizement. Owning it looks like the gentle way you carry an egg fallen from a nest. Leadership abilities are delicate powers; they can both create and destroy. This dichotomy requires careful attention, and the first step of attentiveness to a leadership skill is owning that it exists in the first place. When I reflect on my past, I am aware that denying the leadership abilities spinning up in me looks like a host of lost opportunities.

Work it. Leadership abilities are like muscles: Take them through exercises and they'll grow. Ignore them and they'll stunt, lacking usefulness. Once the discerning people in my life let me in o the secret of myself (that I was a leader) I took zero initiative in working my gifts. I had owned it but I hadn't done any leadership strength training Working those leadership muscles looks like getting training or seeking out leader mentors or praying around the possibilities for your leadership.

Share it. Accept roles that align with your leadership qualities. If you've owned it and trained it, it is likely that opportunities will present themselves so you can share your leadership gifts. If I had tried on leadership roles in the past, perhaps wouldn't be at such a crisis trying to catch up on years of gift neglect.

Be it. This is the pinnacle of leadership. After owning the gift, nurturing it and putting it into practice, then you get to do the truly powerful work of leadership: Be it. Be in this world the way your leadership shows up. Not all leaders lead every situation, team, conversation, space, group, forum, organization or family. Some leaders are the observant ones sitting back, thinking two moves ahead. Some boom into a room, captivating attention with electricity. Leaders come in so many delicious packages, but what I love abou the ones who have owned and worked and shared their skills is that they live in a new realm of being: leader. There is a calm in these leaders because they neither deny what is stirring up nor refuse to accept the truth or neglect their strengths. To arrive at being a leader is like an extended exhale.

I look forward to the exhale. For now I've owned it: OK. Yes, I am a leader. TM

Disparity between us and our world neighbors

In March 2013, Mennonites in the Harrisonburg, Va., area were invited to a gathering at one of our local churches to welcome and support two prominent leaders of the Ethiopian Meserete Kristos Church and the Meserete Kristos College. Only about 100 people attended, a fourth of whom were a part of various singing groups providing special music for the guests. The event raised about $3,500.

I wonder how Kiros Teka Haddis, the president of the fledgling Meserete Kristos College, or Kelbessa Muleta Demena, the associate secretary of the MK Church and chair of the board of the school, felt about no official representatives of either Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Eastern Mennonite Seminary or the Virginia Mennonite Conference being present.

In spite of our being a part of a global Anabaptist community through our membership in Mennonite World Conference, we are worlds apart in having grassroots connections with each other, to say nothing of the disparity in our wealth and standards of living.

Let's compare some numbers:

We locals represented the well-to-do sending church, Mennonite Church USA, which helped launch the mission effort in Ethiopia some 60 years ago. Today MC USA has a declining number of baptized members, around 98,000, while the Meserete Kristos ("Christ the Foundation") Church has over 225,000 members, plus an attendance of twice that number. The Ethiopian church continues to grow rapidly, with 726 congregations and 839 church-planting centers.

The average U.S. income is over $48,000. Ethiopia, one of the poorest countries in the world, has a per-capita income of just over $400.

MC USA has five colleges and two seminaries with a combined enrollment of over 5,000. MKC has one college with an enrollment of 180 men and women who are being trained mostly for various forms of church leadership.

Our five colleges have well-financed development departments working year round to raise budgets of millions for each of their institutions, plus having expanding (and expensive) admissions departments competing with each other in recruiting students from a shrinking pool of students. MKC has no problem attracting sufficient students but struggles to meet its annual operating budget of $325,000, which I'm guessing is less than our U.S. colleges spend on lawn care.

Tuition and room and board for a school like EMU is over $37,000 per year, with considerable financial assistance available. At MKC it only totals $2,500, and students also have to rely heavily on financial aid.

My alma mater, EMU, has raised over $5 million toward a $7 million fund-raising effort to renovate its Science Center, and other MC USA colleges are engaged in similar capital fund-raising projects. By contrast, MKC is having difficulty raising enough money to complete a $500,000 women's dormitory.

Is there something wrong with this?

I think so. If you agree, you may consider supporting some of the other Mennonite colleges and seminaries around the globe, such as Meserete Christos College, the Mennonite Theological College of East Africa, STAKWW (Disciples of the Word College of Christian Religion) in Indonesia or the Latin American Anabaptist Seminary (SEMILLA) in Guatemala City.

Here are some other ways we might help address the above concerns:

1. Have each MC USA college or seminary adopt a sister institution outside the United States or Canada to exchange information, students and faculty as appropriate.
2. Appoint representatives from the Global South as advisory members of the decision-making boards of each of our church educational institutions, participating via Skype or teleconference.
3. Consider a moratorium on new construction or expansion of our institutions until our world neighbors have more of their needs met.
4. Have all MC USA colleges and seminaries become one "multiversity" (with some different specialties located on separate campuses) in order to reduce competition with each other for needed dollars and student enrollment.
5. Have at least one of these U.S. campuses offer a low-cost, no-frills education specifically designed to prepare students for global involvement and to serve as a training center for needy students from other countries.

More needs to be done to reduce the disparity between us and the rest of the world, with our goal being not to have our partners become more like us but for us to become more like them.

Harvey Yoder is pastor of Family of Hope in Harrisonburg, Va.

We are worlds apart in having grassroots connections with each other, to say nothing of the disparity in our wealth and standards of living.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

CLC offers direction to Executive Board

Leaders urged to 'trust God and trust each other' and listen respectfully

Eighty-four leaders from across Mennonite Church USA gathered March 20-22 for the spring meeting of the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan.

CLC members spent the majority of their time together offering feedback to six questions (see box) regarding church structure, polity and relationships, in reference to a decision by Mountain States Mennonite Conference (MSMC) to license a pastor on Feb. 2 in a committed same-gender relationship. The questions were developed by a task force commissioned by the Executive Board (EB) and chaired by moderator-elect Patricia Shelly.

Leaders urged CLC members to "trust God and trust each other," to listen deeply and respectfully to one another and to spend time in worship and silence listening for God's leading for Mennonite Church USA.

Members of the Newton community set up a prayer room across from the CLC meeting space, and members of local Mennonite congregations were invited to come and pray for CLC members and their ongoing work.

"The level of care for each other was extraordinary," said David Boshart of Wellman, Iowa, task force member, CLC member and executive conference minister of Central Plains Mennonite Conference, in a report to the group on March 22. "If we can carry that sense of extraordinary care to the rest of the church, they would be astonished at how God can work in human hearts."

On March 20, MSMC leaders talked about the year-and-a-half-long discernment process that led to the decision to license Theda Good for ministry at First Mennonite Church i Denver. MSMC leaders told their story using Scripture, prayer, worship through song and personal sharing. They also presented a timeline to CLC participants that illustrate the steps in their process. Those present had the opportunity to ask clarifying questions regarding MSMC's process the next morning.

In response to what was shared, both Herm Weaver, MSMC conference minister, and Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, identified some points o regret and things they might have done differently throughout the process.

The CLC spent March 21 responding to the questions posed by the task force in table groups and then reporting back to the larger group. CLC members acknowledged that MSMC's actions place the area conference at variance with the relational covenant the conference made when it joined Mennonite Church USA in 2005.

Table groups offered suggestions for how the EB could respond to the variance reflected by the MSMC decision as it impacts relationships with the rest of the church. The tas force will compile and synthesize the table groups' responses and report back to the CLC by May 1. The task force will then draft a recommendation for consideration by the EB at its June 26–28 meeting in Chicago.

CLC members urged the task force and the EB to ten to the relationship with MSMC. In addition, they encourage the EB and task force to address the broader conversations and disagreements across the church regarding same-gende relationships.

The CLC also expressed a strong hope for finding a way to be together, suggesting that the EB explore new models for relationship among area conferences and congregations.

The Purposeful Plan—a 10-year strategic plan for Mennonite Church USA—was held up as a guide for the work that churchwide agencies, area conferences and congregations can collaborate on in spite of disagreement in other areas.

The CLC also called for a confessional report recounting the process and interactions between the EB and MSMC. Task force members will engage this work as they compile and interpret the responses from the table groups.

People repeatedly named the importance of face-to-face conversation. Several area conference leaders said they are looking for ways to promote healthier and more frequent interconference conversation and relationship building in the future.—*Mennonite Church USA staff*

Questions from task force for CLC

Having heard from Mountain States Mennonite Conference and the report of the task force, what feedback does the CLC want to communicate to the leadership of MSMC?

What is God saying to us and to Mennonite Church USA as we listen and reflect?

Are there better ways than our current organization (and written statements) to cultivate relationships among congregations, area conferences and the denomination?

How will we tend our common life as Mennonite Church USA, especially in light of differing beliefs and practices?

What direction can the CLC offer the Executive Board as it tends to the relationships among congregations, area conferences and the denomination at this time in our history?

What direction can the CLC offer the Executive Board as it responds to MSMC's recent credentialing process?

CLC a 'referendum on the membership guidelines'

Ervin Stutzman speaks candidly about responses he's heard from the church.

At the first of two meetings of the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) open to the public (and the press), Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, called the meetings "a referendum on the membership guidelines."

CLC members—representing area conferences, agencies and constituency groups—met March 20-22 on the campus of Bethel College in North Newton, Kan. The opening session and the hour-long closing session were open to the public.

In a candid talk he called a confession, Stutzman reflected on various people's desire to be right. "One of the fundamental ways we can all be right," he said, "is to be right about our desire to follow Jesus Christ."

Referring to verses in Philippians 1, he added, "We're right if we come to listen and to love one another with the affection of Jesus Christ."

Stutzman said he looks forward to meetings where people come to confess their sins rather than point out the sins of others. He presented a "state of the church" and acknowledged that "over the past few weeks, I have felt both despair and hope in regard to the church's future."

He said that he had received hundreds of emails that he categorized into three groupings: (1) greater inclusion of LGBT individuals, (2) faithfulness to the traditional stance and (3) unity.

Stutzman called this a time of learning, an "accelerated course in how people feel." He learned that written communication does not work as well as face-to-face communication. He said he received letters from people he's known for 30 years who said they weren't sure they could trust him.

"That's hard on me," he said. And when people say he's cooperating with systematic violence, that's also hard. "Is there any space in the world for me to care for people on both ends?" he said.

He said he received letters from many who confided in him about their experiences as LGBT individuals or parents of LGBT individuals. Many other letters called for him "to be faithful to our traditions."

Membership guidelines: As executive director, Stutzman said, he is a custodian of the documents adopted by the church. But he is also a custodian of the change process, he said.

One of his confessions, he said, is that "I was naïve then [in 2001] in thinking the membership guidelines were accepted."

One pastor told him the guidelines "papered over our differences." Stutzman said, "Some of us have come to the place where if we'd known how people felt about [the guidelines], we wouldn't have voted for them."

Hannah Heinzekehr

Geri Jeanguneat (right) of Clinton, Miss., a representative for Native Mennonite Ministries, and Beny Krisbianto, pastor of Nations Worship Center in Philadelphia, serve Communion to Karen Cox (left), moderator of Mountain States Mennonite Conference and pastor of Boulder (Colo.) Mennonite Church.

The guidelines, worked out in the first CLC meeting in 1999, when Stutzman was moderator-elect and CLC chair, were adopted at Nashville 2001, when Mennonite Church USA was formed. He asked how many were at that first CLC meeting. Fewer than 10 raised their hands.

Since then, there have been changes that sociologists would say are unprecedented. Some say, "Those are somebody else's guidelines."

Stutzman noted that no one wants the Executive Board to speak for them, unless it's something they agree with. He said he's "genuinely unsure how large" the different groups representing those three categories of responses are in the church.

He said the Executive Board hopes to conduct a congregational survey in the coming months to learn more.

Discernment: How well CLC engages in genuine discernment of God's will depends on many factors, Stutzman said, "including the willingness of people across the church to take the time that is needed to find a broad consensus in the church."

He called for several attitudes and actions to counteract the polarizing debates about human sexuality: (1) a deep humility that demonstrates commitment to learning during a time of rapid change, (2) a commitment to spiritual discernment that requires "shedding" our commitment to positional advocacy through "indifference" to all but the will of God, and (3) a new era of discovery with representatives of all subgroups in the room, willing to discover a different way of framing the question or approaching the issue.—*Gordon Houser*

Dreams guide ministry of setting captives free

Exaucée Toffa a leader in Christian social ministries in Benin for 24 years

Lynda Hollinger-Janzen

Ruth celebrates her graduation from a pastry apprenticeship. She landed in one of Benin's prisons after she was coerced by her family to participate in crimes. During a 2011 Jette le Filet seminar, Ruth cried uncontrollably when she heard how, in love, Jesus came to set the captives free. She invited Jesus to take control of her life that day. She was released from prison a year later and completed her training as a pastry chef on March 7.

Exaucée Toffa grew up in a well-developed tradition of spiritual prophesy. So when God used dreams to tell her to leave the security of her job as a midwife at Bethesda Hospital, she obeyed—eventually.

Since 2008, Toffa has ministered to minors behind bars in Benin. In that time, she estimates, she has helped about 700 youth get out of prison and into apprenticeships or school.

Every morning, she prays that God will provide for the needs she will encounter that day.

Helped to launch health ministry

Toffa has dedicated her life to alleviating human need. From 1974 to 1989, Benin was a Marxist state with socialized medical care. In the chaos of transitioning to a democratic government in 1990, health services were interrupted. Only the wealthy were able to pay private doctors' fees. So Mennonite Mission Network joined 30 denominations in Benin to provide health care through Bethesda Hospital for people who couldn't afford it otherwise.

The health-care center began small, in a few rooms of a rented house, with dedicated Christian personnel, like Toffa, who volunteered their time. Over the past 24 years, Bethesda has grown into a multibuilding complex with a reputation as one of the best hospitals in the nation.

Initially, consultations and prescriptions at Bethesda cost 30 cents. Although prices have increased slightly over the years, they still remain affordable to most families.

Toffa contributed to the sacrificial giving, hard work, integrity and Christian love that produced this growth. But after 18 years, God called Toffa to a new leap of faith.

Gift of spiritual prophesy and dreams

Hearing God speak was nothing new for Toffa. In her youth, she attended an African-Initiated Church called The Eternal Sacred Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim. She became a visionary in the church and channeled God's messages to members of the congregation.

During her studies at Institut Biblique du Bénin (Benin Bible Institute)—another institution created through partnership between Mission Network and the churches of Benin—Toffa encountered Jesus in a new way.

In 1996, Toffa left the Cherubim and Seraphim Church and joined a church that placed more emphasis on Jesus' teaching and less on an Old Testament understanding of the relationship between God and people.

Twelve years later, Toffa began having a recurring dream. She would find herself in a vast open space with a crowd of teenage boys who were calling her Mama.

She didn't understand what it all meant. By day, she pushed dreams from her mind. Then, one night, things changed. Toffa was in the same place with the boys, but all she could see were their backs. They were walking away from her without saying a word.

Deeply troubled, Toffa could no longer ignore the dream. In April 2008, she went to see a Christian psychologist, who told her she was resisting God's call to a new ministry.

Through prayer, Toffa understood that God was calling her to evangelism in Benin's prisons. A month later, she handed in her resignation as a midwife at Bethesda Hospital

Holistic ministry

After working with a prison ministry organization for three years, Toffa wrote a proposal for her own nonprofit organization, Jette le Filet (Cast the Net), in 2011. Although it can normally take up to 10 years for the government to finalize paperwork for nonprofit organizations, Toffa had her approval documents within 10 days.

Benin's 10 prisons offer little to inmates, but Toffa, as president of Jette le Filet, tries to provide for all aspects of young people's needs—their spiritual well-being, food, clothing, health and education.

Families can bring food and clothing, but the reason many of the youth are in prison is because they lack family support. Also, there is no guarantee that provisions will get to the intended prisoner.

Some of the most appreciated aspects of Toffa's ministry are the three- to four-day seminars that include Bible studies, life skills and literacy classes. Certain prison officials even send their own children.

Seminar participants make meals together, learning to cooperate and to cook nutritious food at the same time. They are given a medical checkup and provided with medicine if needed.

At the end of a seminar, Jette le Filet offers a meal to the prison guards and administrators to thank them for their cooperation and to assure smooth collaboration in the future.

The young prisoners are also taught skills—how to create macramé shoes and shopping bags or knit hats and blouses. Materials cost about a dollar, and the finished product is sold for $2.50. These earnings help the prisoners pay for food.

"I see so much suffering," Toffa says. "Sometimes I come home crying when I don't have the means to help people in such desperate need."

Funded by faith

The income for all these programs comes through prayer and people responding to God's nudging.

Pascal Agossou is a businessman who was impressed with Toffa's ministry. He was attending a meeting in Canada when God awoke him one night and told him to be Toffa's first financial partner.

Jette le Filet's vice president, Alan Hougnon, operates an agency that cleans office buildings. He gives generously of his income and uses his car for trips to prisons in the northern part of the country.

The family of a national government minister pays Toffa's monthly rent.

Rehabilitation after prison

Jette le Filet serves as an intermediary between offenders, their parents and judges. When prisoners are freed, Toffa works to find a place for them in a rehabilitation center. In the past six years, she has helped about 700 children get out of prison and reintegrate into society—400 of them in apprenticeships and another 100 in school or working in family businesses or farms. About 200 of the released young people have returned to prison cells.

"This makes me so sad," Toffa says. "Poverty and the problems in their lives devour [the young people] so easily."

Toffa says that finding rehabilitation placements for the young people when they are released from prison is her biggest problem. She dreams, and this is a wide-awake-brick-and-calculations dream, of building her own rehabilitation center that will provide apprenticeships with Christian businesspeople who will mentor the young people as well as teach them a trade.—*Sara Alvarez for Mennonite Mission Network*

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Mennonite leaders visit Israel/Palestine

Series of learning tours planned in response to Kairos Palestine appeal

Fifteen board members and staff representing various Mennonite agencies and organizations traveled to Israel/Palestine Feb. 24–March 4 to take part in a "Come and See" learning tour. The tour marked the beginning of a denominational initiative to send 100 Mennonite leaders to the region on similar tours over the next five years.

The tour was organized in response to a 2009 appeal from Palestinian Christians called "Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth" (www.kairospalestine.ps).

A coalition representing a range of Christians in Palestine—including Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant and Evangelical—issued the open letter to the global body of Christ as "a word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering." They invited Christian organizations and faith groups to "come and see, in order to understand our reality."

"I am inspired by the steadfastness of Palestinians and Israelis alike in working for peace in the face of many years of disappointments," says Chad Horning of Goshen, Ind., Chief Investment Officer of Everence and a member of the tour.

The tour followed the path of Jesus' life by traveling to Bethlehem, Nazareth, Galilee and, finally, Jerusalem. Along the way, they visited Bethlehem Bible College, Nazareth Village, refugee camps, settlements and community organizations, meeting local activists and villagers in each setting and hearing their stories. In Jerusalem they spent time at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial, and attended a Jewish Sabbath service. The group also connected with people serving with Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Mission Network and Christian Peacemaker Teams. Mennonites have been involved in relief work, service, witness and peacemaking in the region for more than 65 years.

Madeline Maldonado, associate pastor of Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Arca de Salvación, Fort Myers, Fla., and board chair for Mennonite Mission Network, was a first-time visitor to the region. Before leaving, she said, "I hope to experience the culture and the conflict. I hope to feel the pain and frustration that are felt there. I pray that I can see God in what seems impossible for my Western and Latina mind to comprehend. I pray that God opens my eyes."

Isaac Villegas, pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship and Mennonite Church USA Executive Board (EB) member, shared reflections four days into the tour: "I've seen too much. Towering walls stretching for mile after mile, turning Palestinian cities into open-air prisons. Can I choose not to see … the used tear gas canisters I held in my hand—used against Palestinian youth, bought with my taxes, manufactured by a U.S. company in Pennsylvania?"

The group was also encouraged to consider questions of faith in a new light.

GERNIKA 193
PALESTINA19

Participants in the Mennonite learning tour of Israel/Palestine visit the separation wall in the Aida Refugee Camp in Bethlehem. The wall cuts off the camp from an olive grove where residents used to work and play. From left: Isaac Villegas, Stanley Green, Ann Graber Hershberger, Mohammad Al-Azzah (Palestinian tour guide), Joy Sutter, Joanna Hiebert Bergen (MCC Jerusalem staff), Ron Byler, Tanya Ortman, Chad Horning, Ed Diller and Duane Oswald.

"Our experience gave us new insight into Jesus' life and ministry, as well as the current situation," says André Gingerich Stoner, director of holistic witness and interchurch relations for Mennonite Church USA. "We return better prepared to pray and work for God's peace and blessing for everyone in this land."

In 2011, Mennonite Church USA Executive Director Ervin Stutzman—in consultation with the EB—responded to the writers of the Kairos Palestine letter, committing to expand opportunities for Mennonite leaders and members to visit Palestine and learn firsthand about the suffering there. Stutzman and the EB also wrote a letter to members of Mennonite Church USA, asking them to read and discuss the Kairos document, to study Scriptures together on the matter and to consider how their financial lives may be enmeshed in the occupation of Palestine by Israel.

In 2013, the EB underscored its desire to help the church more fully understand both the Israeli and Palestinian experiences and the role of Christian Zionism in this conflict. A "Come and See" fund was established with initial contributions from Mennonite Central Committee U.S., Mennonite Mission Network and Everence to offer some scholarships for learning tours. Individuals, agencies and local congregations covered the remainder, according to Stoner.

The next Israel/Palestine learning tour is scheduled for October and will include participants from Franconia Mennonite Conference, Eastern District Conference and Atlantic Coast Conference.—*Jenn Carreto for Mennonite Church USA*

What does the Bible say about God's body and gender?

Roman Catholic scholar presents annual Theological Lectureship at AMBS.

Does God in the Bible have a body? Does God have gender and sexuality? These were two questions Mark S. Smith, professor of Hebrew and Judaic studies at New York University, asked in this year's Theological Lectureship March 19-20 at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind.

His answers demonstrated what Ben Ollenburger, AMBS professor of Old Testament, described as Smith's strength: bringing the Bible into conversation with our time.

First, Smith explored whether God in the Bible has a body. Although it might seem that God should not have a body, "there is no denying the vast amount of human language used for God in the Bible," Smith said.

Mark S. Smith

The Bible describes three bodies for God, Smith pointed out, and each helps us as humans understand something about God. One is a natural body, human in scale, that walks, eats and drinks, as when God appeared to Abraham in Genesis 18 and 19. The second is a superhuman body, such as when God's hand covers Moses so Moses will see only the God's backside. The third body of God described in the Bible is a cosmic, mystical body, seated over the heavens and earth, as described in the first chapter of Ezekiel.

"While the first two bodies of God express special divine presence that may inspire us, God's mystical body is for us to contemplate and to help us sense the divine working in our lives and our world," Smith said.

The second lecture asked why God is angry in the Bible. While many see God in the Old Testament as a God of angry judgment and God in the New Testament as a God of love, "both love and anger are attributed to God in both testaments," Smith argued. "God's anger and God's love are closely related."

God's anger appears in the Old Testament at times when Israel has challenged or disregarded divine authority and when Israel fails to keep its covenant with God. God's anger is part of God's love, comparable to that of a parent toward a child or one spouse toward another. Smith sees this language of anger and love as a poetic way of expressing the mystery of the divine-human struggle.

The final question Smith addressed is whether God in the Bible has gender or sexuality. "The male understanding of God is true of much of what we see in ancient Israel and in Israel's Bible, yet this is hardly the whole story," Smith said.

"God may be represented as male in most passages, but several passages complicate this picture either with female imagery or representation of God as beyond gender," Smith noted. More female images and references for God appear in the texts as Israel embraced monotheism, and the goddesses that were part of their religious landscape became less prominent.

Moving to the New Testament, Smith examined gender language for the Trinity. God the Father and Jesus the Son emphasize their special relationship, not their maleness, he said. "What counts in the Trinity are the relationships of the three persons and more specifically the relationship of love, not some sort of divine male essence."

The Roman Catholic scholar of the Hebrew world of the Old Testament admitted our modern liturgy has room for more inclusive language for God. Acknowledging the different voices in the church on this issue, Smith said, "That the ending is not yet written but open-ended may be the best news at the moment." He left listeners with the challenge to continue struggling with the question; there is an opportunity "to reconsider not only what the question of sexual and gender language for God discloses about God's transcendence but also for what it hides."—*Mary E. Klassen of AMBS*

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Conference explores 'Watershed Discipleship'

Albuquerque Mennonite Church seeks to live in light of environmental crises.

On a warm weekend in April, a cadre of Mennonites from the top to the bottom of the Rio Grande watershed came together to plant along the storied river's banks. But they weren't scattering cottonwood or piñon—they were seeds of a movement that could help Christians find a way through the unparalleled environmental crisis facing the world today.

The meeting April 4-6 at Albuquerque (N.M.) Mennonite Church was a conference to explore the topic of "Watershed Discipleship," a term coined by Ched Myers and Elaine Enns, the weekend's keynote speakers, who laid out its philosophy after framing the size and scope of the converging environmental crises. See www.watersheddiscipleship.org/.

Enns and Myers, from Oak View, Calif., are part of Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries, an organization committed to radical discipleship, bioregional eco justice, restorative justice and Sabbath economics.

> The watershed paradigm not only holds the key to the survival of our species but can also spark the next revitalization of the church.—Ched Myers

In the opening plenary session, Myers quoted Thomas Merton, speaking at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis: "Christian hope begins where every other hope stands frozen stiff before the face of the Unspeakable."

"It seems to me that whether or not Merton's claim will be vindicated utterly depends on how we Christians choose between discipleship and denial," Myers said. "Our faith and practice from now on will unfold in light of or in spite of the crisis we have just broadly named."

On April 5, Myers and Enns laid out the central assumptions of Watershed Discipleship as a way forward:

- We can't save the world, but we can save places.
- We won't save places we don't love.
- We can't love places we don't know.
- We don't know places we haven't learned.

For a Watershed Discipleship community, the epicenter of thought and action is not the state, country or world but the community's own watershed, Myers said. This means that church communities must be students of their watershed, becoming acquainted with its history, resources and limitations.

It also requires the church to engage in restorative justice for all those who have been wounded by human development—plant, animal and human alike.

"Bioregional thought and practice has spread widely over the past century, yet it has been almost entirely ignored by Christian theology," Myers said. "We are convinced that the watershed paradigm not only holds the key to the survival o our species but can also spark the next revitalization of the church."

Approximately 75 participants from Alamosa, Colo.; Brownsville and McAllan, Texas; Santa Fe, N.M.; and Albuquerque used the weekend to discuss personal practices of simplicity, strengthen ties between churches up and down the region and consider ways to bring the Watershed Discipleship movement to fruition.

Participants also shared in an experience called Losing Turtle Island, led by Erica Littlewolf and Karin Kaufman Wall from Mennonite Central Committee. The activity simulated the loss of land and life indigenous Americans experienced over the course of 300 years as disease, relocations and war ravaged Native communities, and the American government annexed land for white expansion.

The conference kicked off Albuquerque Mennonite Church's long-term commitment to make Watershed Discipleship their mission focus for the next few years. It also comes on the heels of the church's More With Less Fest, in which people in the community involved in simple living pursuits shared their wisdom.

Clayton Roberts, the church's mission elder, says these events are forms of outreach to the community, building on the reputation Mennonites have as Christians who are concerned about peace and justice and practitioners of a land-based ethic.

"We're going to continue finding out what it means to be a community of faith that finds its own authentic way to build community around watershed issues and see how we can become people of place," Roberts said.

One idea that emerged out of the weekend included a 25/75/100 Bioregional Food Covenant, in which signers pledge to purchase 75 percent of their food from within a 100-mile radius by 2025. Another was a proposal to create a confederation of minicommunities dedicated to living out the tenets of Watershed Discipleship.

For Myers and Enns, the need for change in the church and in the world is urgent, but the good news is that it gives the church a purpose.

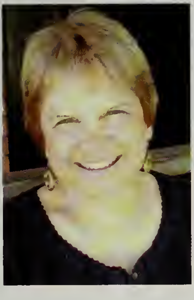
"Once again in the history of the church, the Spirit is inviting us to radical discipleship," Myers said. "The longer-term task, for however long we have, is nothing less than changing culture. But culture change takes a long time, and we don't have a long time."—*Andrew Clouse*

Volunteer visits immigrants in detention

Tina Schlabach sees many mothers separated from their children.

Juanita hasn't seen her daughter in three years. She lived in Georgia for nearly 20 years before she was picked up, detained and deported to Guatemala, her country of origin. Determined to be reunited with her daughter, Juanita decided to come back to the United States. Border Patrol caught her in the desert soon after she crossed the Arizona-Mexico border.

For over a year, Juanita has been detained at Eloy (Ariz.) Detention Center—60 miles south of Phoenix. She communicates with her daughter, who now lives with an aunt in Texas, through phone and letters.



Tina Schlabach

"This is a case of really difficult family separation," says Tina Schlabach, who visits Juanita and other women who live in detention centers. Schlabach is a member of Shalom Mennonite Church in Tucson, Ariz.

Most of the women Schlabach visits are immigrant mothers who lived in the United States for 10 to 20 years before being detained for some offense, usually a misdemeanor. After serving their sentences, they were placed in detention centers.

Like Juanita, some detainees have children who are U.S. citizens. Others came to the United States because of domestic violence and poverty and have children back in their country of origin being cared for by family members.

Schlabach says these mothers experience suffering and stress because they are separated from their families and unable to help them. "There are a lot of amazingly resilient women," she says. "Many have a strong sense of faith, and this helps them continue."

Schlabach says the average stay in a detention center can be days, weeks, months or years, depending on the situation. "The psychological burden of not knowing when they'll be released is very, very great," she says.

According to Schlabach, about 30,000 people across the United States are in detention. Many of them are in private, for-profit detention centers like Corrections Corporation of America's Eloy Detention Center, which contracts a certain number of people to fill its beds. "It's a business, and they're earning money," Schlabach says.

She observed that detention centers are often placed "out in the boonies." She says, "It's difficult to visit detention centers, and I think that's not an accident."

Schlabach says she has always been interested in hospitality toward immigrants. As a young adult, she studied in Spanish-speaking countries and worked with immigrants from Latin America. While on the pastoral team at Waterford Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., she worked alongside others to encourage joint worship services with Comunidad Cristiana Adulam, a neighboring Hispanic immigrant congregation.

When her family moved to Tucson from Goshen in the summer of 2012, Schlabach wanted to be involved in immigration advocacy. A friend suggested she volunteer with Casa Mariposa—a community in Tucson that offers friendship and support to immigrants detained in the area.

"We want to visit them to let them know they're not forgotten—that there are people who care about their situation as a Christian brother or sister," Schlabach says.

This aligns with Mennonite Church USA's recently revised churchwide immigration statement, which renounces the mistreatment of immigrants in the United States.

Schlabach visits detention centers with one or two other women from Casa Mariposa. "I started out going by myself, but it was too emotionally heavy to do that," she says.

When she arrives at Eloy Detention Center, usually around 7:30 a.m., a guard calls together the women who wrote to Casa Mariposa requesting visits. Schlabach visits in the morning, since it's more difficult to find the women in the afternoon, when they have work assignments—such as kitchen work, cleaning or working in the library.

"They earn a dollar a day for their work," Schlabach says. The women save money to buy supplies, such as phone cards and stamps, from the shop in the detention center.

Schlabach and the women from Casa Mariposa listen to the detained women's stories. They support and affirm the women, who try to make the best decisions they can in difficult situations—whether that means choosing deportation to their home country or remaining in detention custody to try to find a legal avenue to stay in the United States.

"We're very clear—we're not attorneys, we're visiting them as friends," Schlabach says. She says fewer than half the detainees have an attorney, so many of them have to represent themselves in court, often in a second language.

Schlabach sees her volunteer work with detainees as a faith response inspired by "God's imperative to love the foreigners among us" from Leviticus 19:33-34.

"Wherever we live, there are immigration detention centers just a few hours away," she says.—*Kate Yoder, intern for* The Mennonite

U.S. Mennonites visit K'ekchi' Mennonites in Guatemala

Learning and service trip provides mutual encouragement.

EMM board member Larry Lehman (in blue baseball cap) interacts with students from Bezaleel, the K'ekchi' Mennonite Education Center in San Juan Chamelco, Guatemala.

Eighteen U.S. Mennonites visited members of the K'ekchi' Mennonite Church as part of a learning and service trip to Guatemala led by former Eastern Mennonite Missions' (EMM) workers Larry and Helen Lehman Feb. 26-March 8. Travelers from Franklin Mennonite Conference in Pennsylvania were joined by participants from Juniata, Lancaster and Mechanicsburg, Pa., and from Washington, D.C.

The group served at Bezaleel, the K'eckchi' Mennonite Education Center in the province of Alta Verapaz, where 135 rural youth live and study. Trip participants worked with school staff to paint and build a wood shed for the kitchen firewood. Mary Minor, a retired U.S. school teacher and EMM board member, spent several days assisting the high school English teacher.

On March 2, participants attended K'ekchi' worship services and had lunch in K'ekchi' homes. The group later met with leaders of the churches to learn about the history of the K'ekchi' church and its present reality.

"More than 45 years ago, Helen and I arrived in Guatemala to begin working among the K'ekchi'," said Larry Lehman. "At one point, the team in Guatemala, including Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) personnel, grew to more than a dozen people. Now, the church has matured into having national leaders, and only one couple, Galen and Phyllis Groff, remains to provide coaching and support."

The first baptisms in the K'ekchi' Mennonite Church occurred 41 years ago, and since then the church has grown to include more than 130 congregations. In addition to providing training for its pastors and leaders, the church provides Sunday school lessons for its congregations, administers a large health program and runs Bezaleel. The K'ekchi' Mennonite Church continues to grow and share its faith with its neighbors.

In addition to learning about the church, trip participants also learned about the suffering endured by the K'ekchi' people as a result of European colonization. Former MCC worker Rob Cahill took the group to a Dominican monastery in Carchá that visually illustrates how the Spaniards conquered the K'ekchi' and other indigenous groups and used them in forced labor on their plantations.

Thousands of K'ekchi' were killed in the 1970s and '80s during the Guatemalan Civil War; their mass graves are still being uncovered. Cahill said this legacy of oppression continues to affect the K'ekchi' to this day.

Galen Groff, EMM regional representative in Central America, expressed appreciation for the strengthening of the relationship between the K'ekchi' church and the church in the United States. "Even though the K'ekchi' church is operating independently, its members will always need to know they are a valued part of the international body of Christ and that we are committed to walking with them."
—Chris Fretz of Eastern Mennonite Missions

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Sister Care manual translated into K'ekchi'

Phyllis Groff distributes 300 booklets to pastors and district women's leaders.

Phyllis Groff

Vilma Yat Chen (at right) receives her K'ekchi' Sister Care manual from Vincenta Pacal Caal.

Women from seven Central American countries gathered in Guatemala City in February 2013 for a Sister Care Seminar led by Rhoda Keener and Carolyn Heggen. There was laughter, sharing, time for silent reflection and time to talk. Sister Care is a ministry of Mennonite Women USA.

Maria Chub and Eva Luvia Cuc, two K'ekchi' women, attended the Sister Care study. They said it felt a bit intimidating to be the only ones who wore traditional indigenous clothing and who spoke Spanish as a second language.

Inspired by the retreat's impact and the commission to reach out to others with the teaching received, Eastern Mennonite Mission worker Phyllis Groff translated the Sister Care material into the K'ekchi' language, working closely with two K'ekchi' women. Eva Luvia Cuc, who had attended the workshop, helped grapple with the terms and "roughed out" a translation. Then Carmela Caal proofread the translation for detail and grammar. Fran Eachus, a Wycliffe translator who spent her life work on the K'ekchi' Bible translation, assisted in correcting the final draft.

Along with the Spanish version, Groff requested a copy in English to make it easier to translate the Sister Care booklet into K'ekchi'. As they worked together, Groff and Luvia both deepened their understanding of the material, and the translation process deepened their friendship.

Finally, at the K'ekchi' General Church Assembly in January, Groff distributed the 300 printed K'ekchi' Sister Care booklets to pastors and district women's leaders, encouraging them to read the book and share what they learned with other women. Franklin Conference Mennonite Women funded the printing of the manuals.

One pastor, Sebastian Ical, came to Phyllis requesting more copies, as he has a large congregation with many women leaders. Because the women leaders are mostly illiterate, Sebastian planned to teach the study first. He called Groff by phone later to ask if a woman from a different church in their community would be able to receive the book and study.

When Groff attended a district women's meeting, women came to chat with her. One said, "The other week, when you gave us the Sister Care book, you told us we must first be healed ourselves before we can help others heal. I was afraid, as I held many hidden hurts in my life. I felt sad for my past. I prayed and asked God to remove those painful memories. I felt healed as God lifted me up from my fallen knees in a dream."

She continued, "I'm concerned about a broken relationship with a relative who attends my church. She refuses to talk with me. I want to be reconciled but don't know how, as she doesn't want me to visit her. I know this is wrong. What can I do?" Groff talked about the importance of prayer and asking God for someone who would meet with her for prayer and later visit this relative.—*Mennonite Women USA*

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Everence, Praxis commit $3.5 million to green bond

Purchase supports consumer loans and leases through Toyota Financial Services.

Everence and the Praxis Intermediate Income Fund have purchased a total of $3.5 million in the auto industry's first-ever asset-backed green bond through Toyota Financial Services.

Issued in March, the $1.75 billion Toyota Financial Services green bond offering (which was increased from its original $1.25 billion due to strong investor demand) is a momentous offering in the asset-backed securities market as the first green bond from an auto finance company. Proceeds from the bond will fund new retail finance contracts and lease contracts for qualified Toyota and Lexus hybrid or alternative fuel power-train vehicles.

"This green bond is really the first of its kind for the auto industry, helping people get loans for energy-efficient vehicles," says Benjamin Bailey of the Praxis Intermediate Income Fund. "It fits well into our goal of purchasing investments that make both social and financial sense, and our commitment to support renewable energy projects."

"At Everence and Praxis, we are just as concerned about the impact our investments have on others as we are about the financial returns we receive," says David Gautsche, president of Praxis Mutual Funds. "We're excited about this inaugural asset-backed green bond through Toyota Financial Services and are glad to be part of it."

Everence and Praxis Mutual Funds have long been leaders in green bond investments. The Praxis Intermediate Income Fund has a history of purchasing bonds that make a social impact. In 2009, the Praxis Intermediate Income Fund became one of the first socially responsible investors to purchase a U.S. dollar World Bank green bond.

High social impact investments now make up more than 10 percent of the Praxis Intermediate Income Fund. Beyond auto industry asset-backed securities, market rate investments include bonds in solar and wind installations, vaccines, medical research and community infrastructure. The fund's high social impact investments also include community development investments, which benefit disadvantaged communities in the United States and around the world.

Praxis Mutual Funds, advised by Everence Capital Management, is a leading faith-based, socially responsible family of mutual funds designed to help people and groups integrate their finances with faith values.—*Everence*

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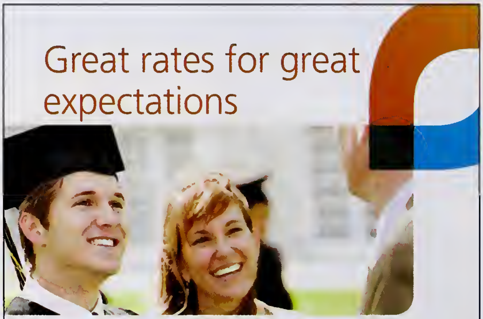

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Opening DOORs in Atlanta

The first all-African-American youth group serves with DOOR Discover in Atlanta.

Every day since last November, Denise (a pseudonym), a DOOR Discover participant, told her mother she wanted to drop out of school. But Denise's DOOR experience gave her determination to stay in school.

The service club from Turner Chapel participated in Atlanta's DOOR program Jan. 24-26. The African Methodist Episcopal congregation in Marietta, Ga., has more than 6,000 members. It is the first church of its size to partner with DOOR. Yolanda Davis, the director of Youth Discipleship at Turner Chapel, was drawn to DOOR for its understanding that God is already present in the city. Davis was grateful for the "middle and high school youth to experience urban social issues from a Christian perspective."

"Many of our youth walked away wrestling with the number of homeless people living in the city and our faith community is addressing or not addressing the issue," she says.

Turner Chapel also became the first all-African-American youth group to take part in Atlanta's Discover program, which lasts for a week or a weekend. African-American youth groups and those of other minority cultures have served in other DOOR cities around the United States, but for Atlanta, this was a first.

Tonya Greene, city director for DOOR Atlanta, was concerned there wasn't more diversity among participants who come to serve and grow in their faith.

Greene, who is African American, says, "We don't have to go overseas to be mission workers; we can do this right here in our community," said Greene. DOOR participants from Turner Chapel didn't need to go far.

Turner Chapel's youth served at Gateway Center, a community that helps people overcome homelessness. The group also spent time serving at Global Soap. This agency helps prevent hygiene-related diseases through recycling and distributing hotel soaps. Becca Cranford, a DOOR service group leader, helped the youth group interpret what they saw. She guided them to various places and led discussions about what the Bible says about poverty and the role of Christians to help each other overcome it.

Each evening, DOOR leaders invited participants to reflect about their experiences through worship. Often, this included guest speakers from the local community. One evening, Denise sat with her group from Turner Chapel and listened to Angelica (a pseudonym). Angelica studies hospitality at Le Cordon Bleu University, but her challenges exceed that of most college students. She has no home.

As Denise listened to Angelica share her story, she realized that her own struggles could be a lot worse. Even though Denise didn't enjoy school, she had a home to return to. The determination in Angelica's voice gave Denise hope that she could persevere and finish high school.

On a Sunday, the youth from Turner Chapel worshiped with Mercy Community Church in Atlanta, which is committed to heal a broken world, starting with those in their pews. Most of the people who attend the church struggle with homelessness, addiction or both. "[The Mercy congregation] loves people where they're at," Greene says.

"We all came with our different and sometimes conflicting perspective on things, but we can all agree on one thing: this [DOOR] experience was truly transforming," says the youth newsletter for Turner Chapel, reflecting on the group's experience.

Both Greene and Davis hope to continue the relationship between DOOR and Turner Chapel. Greene has already visited the 275 youth who attend there. Greene says she was thrilled that the predominately African American congregation chose to serve with DOOR. She hopes that other minority cultures will do the same.

"If God is present [in the city already], then as Christians we should be present, too," says Davis.—*Kelsey Hochstetler of Mennonite Mission Network*

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How to choose a Bible for a child

Kathy Meyer Reimer offers guidance to parents and congregations

Looking for a Bible to give as a gift to a child? As a congregation, do you celebrate the transition of starting school by giving all the first graders their own Bible?

Both choosing a Bible for my children or the children in my congregation and my professional interest in children's literature have given me the opportunity to look at many Bibles for children and realize how critical our choices are to the theology our children learn. Any time we try to simplify the text for children, we strip the writing and the ideas to their essence and keep the focus sharp. Part of the art of writing for children is that the writer must be succinct and clear—no extraneous description, no wasted lines.

But it is this winnowing and sharpening of focus that brings the discussion of "which Bible?" to the fore. In each decision about what to cut out, what to shorten, what language to change, what exact words to use, the writer is bringing an interpretation of the text, of the meaning of the text and of its intent. We are using our theological understanding of the story to simplify it, and that means each story carries implicit assumptions about what is the most important message that Bible story has to offer.

Part of the art of writing for children is that the writer must be succinct and clear—no extraneous description, no wasted lines.

The choice you make in your gift giving or congregational use is important. It is consequential to how your children will understand the Bible. And it is worth the time and energy to think carefully about what to choose.

There are a number of kinds of biblical text we typically use with children: single Bible stories published as a book, Bible storybooks and Bibles for children. Single Bible stories take an individual story, such as the creation story, the flood or the exodus and lift that story from the Bible and tell it in a paraphrased or narrative form. Bible storybooks move through the Bible, picking out the most common stories told to children and tell each as an individual story but in chronological form to match the order that would be in the Bible. Bibles for children are simplified or paraphrased but include the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Depending on the intended age of the audience, these may include some of the more troubling and difficult-to-interpret passages as we move through the Old and New testaments.

There are also plenty of books that look at topics related to the Bible or directly from the Bible but do not directly reference the biblical text. Biblical people in a biographical form (a book about Joseph or Esther), books that look at biblical plants or animals or books that cover biblical time periods can be wonderful sources, but they do not claim to be biblical text. These will not be considered in this article.

In this article I will focus on how we might think about choosing Bible storybooks—those books written for younger children or early readers that are chronological and may or may not be comprehensive of all the stories in the Bible.

One way to start thinking about reviewing Bibles is to choose a couple of stories you think are critical in the telling of the biblical narrative. A sample of the stories I have chosen over time include: Adam and Eve in the garden and the eating of the fruit, Abraham being asked to sacrifice Isaac, Noah and the building of the ark, Jonah and the big fish, Joseph being sold into slavery, and the crucifixion of Jesus. I have chosen these because I care about what my children learned about God and the Bible from these stories Also because they often expose the theology of the paraphraser or re-teller who is writing.

It is troubling to think of a father being asked by God to sacrifice his own son. I cared about how my son understood this text when he was growing up. Getting banished from Eden was not a pleasant event. I cared about how my daughter understood why Eve and Adam were banished. Being hung on a cross is a dark and sad event. I cared how my children understood sacrifice, atonement and forgiveness.

Caring about these things meant it mattered to me how the text was simplified, how it was interpreted, what were the given reasons and results of these actions of people and of God.

Let me give an example of how our theology comes out clearly in how we simplify a text for children. I'll use the story of the crucifixion both because it is key to understanding the arc of the biblical story and because it is fairly easy t see theological differences in how we tell the story.

I will also note here that there are numerous Bibles for the very young (2- to 4-year-olds) that do not tell the crucifixion story. That can be an appropriate decision in thinking about the developmental age of the child. If the intended goal is to have the child know God loves them, and there are only a few stories represented in the Bible storybook because of constraints of attention, there are other stories in the Bible that send that message more clearly. Many, however, do choose to include the crucifixion and Bible storybooks for the 4- to 8-year-old range almost always do.

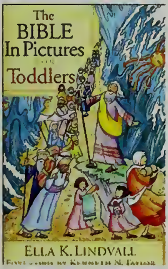
My First Bible
IN PICTURES

For our example of how theology becomes clear in the biblical text, let's start with Kenneth Taylors' *My First Bible in Pictures* (Tyndale Press, 1989). This is the text explaining the crucifixion:

"They are killing Jesus. He is dying on a cross. Why are they killing him? Has he done anything wrong? No! He is dying because of the wrong things you and I have done. Jesus is letting God punish him because of our sins" (from Luke 23).

In this retelling of the crucifixion, the focus is on God's punishment for sin. In this case it is Jesus taking the punishment. But Jesus is taking the punishment because of us. This makes Jesus' death on the cross personal to today—almost as if it was the fight you had with your brother yesterday that was the reason Jesus was killed on the cross. While I want my boys to be kind to each other, I have to ask myself if this is the main message or the theology of the crucifixion that is parallel to my Anabaptist beliefs. This paraphrase suggesting God's intention was punishment for doing wrong and that the crucifixion was God's punishment, which ended up landing on Jesus, is not closely matched with Anabaptist understandings of God's role in Jesus' death.

I'm also interested that the writer chose to use the present ("He is dying because of the wrong things you and I have done") when referring to an event that happened in the past. For young children, this mix of time frames can be confusing.



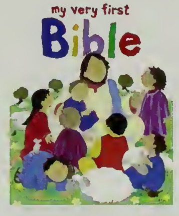
Another telling of this story for young children in a Bible storybook focuses more on atonement. Ella Lindvall's *The Bible in Pictures for Toddlers* (Moody Press, 2002) tells the story this way: "See the crosses? Men put Jesus on a cross to die. But when they did that, God did something wonderful. God put on Jesus the bad things we do, and He died for us. He did that because he loves us" (John 19:16-18).

Here the crucifixion is still about the "bad things we do" (again in the present tense, which, as I mentioned above, can be confusing when mixed with the past), but it is because Jesus was willing to substitute for us, and God loved us rather than punished us. Here the theology is substitutional atonement, and the reason for that is love. Once again, we have a chance to think about how that may or may not fit with the Anabaptist theology of Jesus' death and God's intervention.

A third popular Bible storybook for young children is *My Little Bible* by Mary Hollingsworth (Word Publishers, 1988). She tells the story this way: "God's son, Jesus, was killed on a cross by His enemies. It was a dark, sad day. Jesus' friends took Him down from the cross. They wrapped Him in special cloths and buried Him. But three days later Jesus came back to life! Jesus is more powerful than death. That is why Jesus can save us from our sins and that is good news!" (John 19:16-20:18).

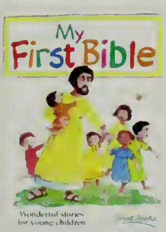
my little Bible

This retelling mentions death and sadness, but the emphasis is on the power Jesus had over death; Jesus is a powerful person and is God's Son. The crucifixion here is not about punishment or about substituting Jesus for the sins of people but about the power of God. Jesus' power is what saves people, and that is good news. Again, power over death and salvation is a theological statement. These are the areas of critical focus in this telling of the crucifixion.



In Lois Rock's *My Very First Bible* (Lion Publishers / Good Books, 2003), she tells the story of the crucifixion this way: "The next day, Jesus was put to death, nailed to a cross of wood. In the evening, a few friends came and took the body to a tomb. 'We must say goodbye,' said one. The sky was getting dark. 'This must be the end of Jesus making the world a better place,' they wept."

This Bible speaks less to the death or the reasons for it and more to the meaning behind it—Jesus's friends had to say goodbye; he was making the world a better place, and now that was going to end. This passage does not speak as much to the action of God or Jesus in the crucifixion but to the work Jesus was doing while he was alive; the work that would now end. This references God's intervention in the world through Jesus or God's mission in the world. God was making the world a better place, and Jesus was carrying out that mission—another theological approach to this story.



Pat Alexander's retelling in *My First Bible* (Lion Publishers, 1997, Good Books, 2002) goes like this: "All night long, Jesus' enemies asked him angry questions. Then, early in the morning, they took him to the Roman Governor. 'Jesus has done nothing wrong,' the Governor said. He wanted to let Jesus go. But the crowd would not let him. 'Kill him! Nail him to a cross!' the crowd shouted angrily. It was Jesus they wanted to kill! But why? Jesus was good. He had done nothing wrong. These people hated Jesus. 'He tells lies about God,' they said. They did not believe he really was God's promised King. … They took him to Skull Hill and nailed him to a cross. There were two other prisoners on crosses, one on each side of Jesus. Above Jesus' head was a notice: 'Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews.' Jesus' mother, Mary, stood close to the cross, with his special friend John. 'Look after her for me, John,' Jesus said from the cross. And from that day on John took care of Mary. Jesus did not hate the soldiers who nailed him to the cross. He did not hate his cruel enemies. 'Father, forgive them,' he prayed. At last Jesus cried: 'I have finished my work.' Then he died. It was the saddest day."

This retelling is a bit longer and stretches the age range higher, which allows it to nuance the meaning a little more. It focuses on the reasons Jesus was on the cross, who else was around and that Jesus forgave those around him. It is also interesting that it mentions his mother and Jesus' concern for her. The overarching message of this retelling is one of forgiveness. When bad things happened that Jesus didn't deserve, he forgave. It is a theology that is a bit less personal; it is not necessarily involving or including the reader or the reader's actions; God is not referred to directly as the focus is on what Jesus did. Jesus forgave. That is a theological statement as well.

It helps me understand the basis of the simplification, the perspective and interpretation a particular author is bringing to their retelling of biblical text when I compare different passages, and it helps me understand their theological frame. The first retelling here focused on God's punishment, the second on Jesus substituting for us, the third on Jesus' power, the fourth on Jesus' work in the world and the fifth on Jesus' innocence and forgiveness of others. These are theological stances or understandings about what the story has to tell us, not just different words paraphrasers or retellers have chosen to use.

Illustrations are an integral part of the message of the text, especially when we are working with the biblical text for young children.

The different ways this story gets told points to different aspects of God or different ways we understand and make sense of God, Jesus and the Bible. These stories communicate our deepest understandings of God to young children early in their lives. It matters what we communicate and, for my children and now my Sunday school children, it is helpful to have a theology that is consistent with what they hear on Sunday morning in worship and what they are learning in their Sunday school curriculum.

The last two retellings, by Lois Rock (*My Very First Bible*) and Pat Alexander (*My First Bible*), happen to be the ones I chose in order to talk with my children about the crucifixion.

The
BIBLE
for Children

For the younger child, Rock's retelling focusing on God's work in the world through Jesus opened the conversation to the whole story of Jesus and the Bible. As my children got a bit older, the second one more satisfactorily answered their questions about why someone would do that. And who did this? And why were they so angry? And what happened to his family? They also matched my understanding o Anabaptist theology more closely with the emphasis on God's work in the world, Jesus' innocence, mismatched expectations of a king, and forgiveness. (Lion/Good Books also publishes *The Bible for Children* written by Murray Watts fo school-aged children, 6 to 12 years old, which is beyond the scope of this article, but I have found it to be a good match i text and illustration for the older elementary child, and it is one of my favorite Bible story books for children.)

Illustrations are also critical to interpretation of text for children. You may recall the images in the Bible you had as a child and always see certain scenes, even in your adulthood, with those illustrations attached. When I do Bible workshops, I'm always amazed at the number of people who recognize a certain Bible I have by the illustrations. Illustration is also a form of interpretation—it communicates time, context and character as much as the words.

In a Bible storybook from the time I was growing up, the illustration with Noah's ark is a pen-and-ink drawing. The people who are not in Noah's chosen family as the ark sets off are included with their feet off the ground and hands extended as they hang onto the edge of the ark with their fingers. The illustration is of Noah walking along the edge o the boat peeling people's fingers back so they fall back into the rising water to drown—as they were not those elected to be on the boat. This image is seared into my mind—more powerful than any of the words attending the story. It was not that the text talked about those left behind, but the illustration said more to me than anything else in the story about God and about Noah, and that is the image that comes to my mind when I hear of Noah's Ark.

How does that contrast with what image might come to your mind if you grew up with a Bible that included colored illustrations of animals happily walking onto the ark two by two. Or an image of Noah romping with the animals even after 35 days at sea (and the ark being amazingly clean). Or with Noah and family and all the animals rendered as Precious Moments characters. Those are all different images to have in your mind as you read, and that would allow for a different interpretation of the story from my image of Noah.

Illustrations matter. They are an integral part of the message of the text, especially when we are working with the biblical text for young children.

This article has examined Bible storybooks—telling the Bible through stories and illustrations for young children. We could do the same with Bibles for the elementary school aged child or even with Bibles for teenagers. Particularly with the advent of the graphic novel Bible and with themed Bibles (e.g., the Green Bible, the Love Waits Bible) we have a much larger selection of teen Bibles than we did 15 years ago, when we generally picked a translation our congregation used to give our teens.

Within specifically Anabaptist contexts we have a new resource that will soon be available and about which I am excited. *Shine!*, the new Anabaptist Sunday school curriculum, is accompanied by a children's Bible with the title *Shine On* (MennoMedia/Brethren Press, 2014). It includes Scripture quoted from the NRSV and edited by Rebecca Seiling, Anna Spicher and Rose Mary Stutzman. It is in the process of being printed. I have seen a preprint version. It is not reviewed in this article because it is aimed at the elementary school aged child (6-12 years), and this article focuses on the younger child, but it is a Bible I am eager to see in print.

It matters what we read to children and what they hear from the Bible. How the Bible stories are told will influence how they understand God and God's work in our world. May we hold the text carefully, share it with our children generously and cherish it.—*Kathy Meyer Reimer, professor of education/literacy/children's and adolescent literature, Goshen (Ind.) College*

Bibles referred to in the article:

My First Bible by P. Alexander, illustrated by Leon Baxter (Good Books, 2002)

My Little Bible by M. Hollingsworth, illustrated by Stephanie McFetridge Britt (Word Publishing, 1988)

The Bible in Pictures for Toddlers by E.K. Lindvall, illustrated by R. Langton (Moody Publishers, 2002)

My Very First Bible by L. Rock, illustrated by Alex Ayliffe (Good Books, 2003)

Shine On, edited by R. Seiling, A. Spicher and R.M. Stutzman, illustrated by M. Miller (MennoMedia and Brethren Press, 2014)

My First Bible in Pictures by K.N. Taylor, illustrated by Richard and Frances Hook (Tyndale House Publishers, 1989)

The Bible for Children by M. Watts, illustrated by Helen Cann (Good Books, 2002)

Investment Officer

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WORKERS

Flowers, David D., was licensed as pastor at Christiansburg Mennonite Fellowship, Christiansburg, Va., on Jan. 12.

Heistand, Daryl, was ordained as lead pastor at Risser Mennonite Church, Elizabethtown, Pa., on April 6.

Schwartz , Matthew, was ordained as associate pastor at Eastside Church, Harrisonburg, Va., on Feb. 23.

OBITUARIES

Alderfer, Stanley H., 85, Harleysville, Pa., died March 15. Spouse: Eva D. Rittenhouse Alderfer. Parents: Jacob A. and Edna K. Hunsberger Alderfer. Children: Connie Sue Souder, David Noel Alderfer, Phillip Grant Alderfer, Michael Scott Alderfer; three grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 19 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville.

Bontrager, Kenneth L., 76, Glendale, Ariz., died Jan 6. Spouse: Mary Lou Wengerd Bontrager. Parents: Andrew and Nora Yutzy Bontrager. Children: Neil, Troy; four grandchildren. Memorial service: Jan. 12 at Trinity Mennonite Church, Glendale.

Brunk, Marjorie Frances Secrest, 95, Sterling, Ill., died March 24. Spouse: Boyd Austin Brunk (deceased). Parents: Verne and Clara Secrest. Children: Barbara Metz, Timothy, Philip; five grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Memorial service will be held at a later date at Science Ridge Mennonite Church, Sterling.

Coffman, Donald V., 92, Shipshewana, Ind., died March 13. Spouse: Margaret P. Mishler Coffman. Parents: Victor and Vinetta Garber Coffman. Children: Barbara Hirschy, Carolyn Miller, David, Paul; 10 grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 18 at Shore Mennonite Church, Shipshewana.

Cordell, Beulah Martin, 85, Chambersburg, Pa., died Dec. 24, 2013. Spouse: Bishop Merle G. Cordell. Parents: Charles and Lula Holsinger Martin. Children: Doris, Ruby, David, Richard; five grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 29 at Marion Mennonite Church, Marion, Pa.

Detweiler, Alta Mae Beachy, 94, Phoenixville, Pa., died March 4. Spouse: Solomon B. Detweiler (deceased). Parents: Menno and Fannie Christner Beachy. Children: Howard, Fannie Thomas, Anna Louise Detweiler, Paul, Leroy; seven grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 22 at Frazer Mennonite Church, Frazer, Pa.

Diseroad, Victor "Gene" Eugene, 86, Souderton, Pa., died March 10. Spouse: Jane S. Alderfer Diseroad. Parents: Victor Hugo Diseroad and Rebecca Kessler Diseroad. Funeral: March 22 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Eichelberger, Duane, 94, Mackinaw, Ill., died July 24, 2013. Spouse: Mildred Stutzman (deceased). Parents: Albert B. and Una Williams Eichelberger. Children: David, Don, Daniel; nine grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 27 at Hopedale Mennonite Church, Hopedale, Ill.

Frankenfield, Marian Suzanna Nester, 91, Emmaus, Pa., died March 17. Spouse: Asher Russell Frankenfield (deceased). Parents: Elmer Calvin Nester and Mabel Andora Fegley Nester. Children: James A., Barbara McLaughlin; five grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 22 at Upper Milford Mennonite Church, Old Zionsville, Pa.

Frey, Willard James, 89, Archbold, Ohio died Jan. 21. Spouse: Valetta Beck Frey (deceased). Spouse: Delores Ann Short Fre (deceased). Parents: Edward B. and Fannie Rupp Frey. Children: Sue Ann Overholt, Mary Jo Wilson, Peggy Arndt, Lee; 10 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 24 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Glick, Mary E. Umble, 92, Lititz, Pa., died March 30. Spouse: Pastor Herman N. Glick (deceased). Parents: Elam H. and Anna Kauffman Umble. Children: James, Ann Derrick, Virginia Graybill, Susan Roth; nine grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 4 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Atglen, Pa.

Hershberger, DeElda "Dee" Eicher, 95, Milford, Neb., died March 12. Spouse: Edgar Hershberger (deceased). Parents: Warren and Anna Kremer Eicher. Children: Gordon, Gregory, Ray; five grandchildren; two step-grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; three step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 16 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford.

Hershberger, Winston Mark, 65, Springs, Pa., died March 24. Parents: Ray M. and Grace Miller Hershberger. Funeral: March 27 at Springs Mennonite Church.

Hofer, LaVonne D., 72, Freeman, S.D., died March 23, of M.S. related complications. Parents: David D. S. and Matilda D. Hofer. Funeral: March 27 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Hunsberger, Martha A. Shelly, 91, Telford, Pa., died Feb. 25. Spouse: Winfield R. Hunsberger (deceased). Parents: Erwin and Cora Alderfer Shelly. Children: Duane, Glen, Dawn Miller, Roger Lee; 11 grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 16 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Kaufman, Richard "Dick" R., 71, Hesston, Kan., died Jan. 26. Spouse: Barbara A. Claassen Kaufman. Parents: Dick and Lizzie Yutzy Kaufman. Children: Christine Schweitzer, Mara Kaufman; one grandchild. Funeral: Jan. 30 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Kinsey, Ray Jacob, 78, Archbold, Ohio, died Dec. 27, 2013. Spouse: Grace Waidelich Kinsey. Parents: Walter and Alma Hauck Kinsey. Children: Randy, Karen Kelley, Janet Myers, Wesley, Julie Boykins; 12 grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 31 at West Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio.

Landes, Esther K., 100, Lansdale, Pa., died March 23. Spouse: Wilson S. Landes (deceased). Parents: Melvin and Sallie Koffel Ruth. Children: Gladys Kopp, Beatrice Ruth, Dorothy Stover, Elaine Weiler; 10 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. No memorial service.

Litwiller, Brent D., 48, Hopedale, Ill., died Jan. 4. Parents: Dale and Rosina Kauffman Litwiller. Funeral: Jan. 8 at Hopedale Mennonite Church.

Litwiller, Elmer G., 86, Hopedale, Ill., died Dec. 2013. Spouse: Ethel I. David Bachman. Spouse: Maxine Newlin Litwiller (deceased). Parents: John E. and Phoebe Good Litwiller. Children: Wayne, Sandra Morris, Janice Eck, Nancy Cunningham, Edward; 11 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Dec. 16 at Hopedale Mennonite Church.

Litwiller, Marguerite A. King, 92, Minier, Ill., died Aug. 3, 2013. Spouse: William E. Litwiller (deceased). Parents: Elmer R. King, Sr. and Lena M. Kennell King. Children: William E., Rita Litwiller, Karen Yoder, Rosalie Semic, Roberta Bean; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 8 at Hopedale Mennonite Church, Hopedale, Ill.

Miller, Leo J., 88, Orrville, Ohio, died Feb. 27. Spouse: Dorothy Gingerich Miller. Parents: John and Lucy Yoder Miller. Children: Jenell Ulrich, Rhonda Savage, Gail Manickam, Renee Koshmider; 10 grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 4 at Orrville Mennonite Church.

Paden, Roxanne, 52, Belleville, Pa., died April 1, of cancer. Parents: Tom and Freida Paden. Funeral: April 4 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville.

Roggie, Pauline Haggerty, 88, Lowville, N.Y., died March 22. Spouse: Garmon A. Roggie (deceased). Parents: Leonard and Nellie Dunn Haggerty. Children: Bruce, Dona Barney, Sharon Boshart, Judy Williams, Garmon Jr., Boyce; 13 grandchildren; many great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 26 First Mennonite Church of New Bremen, New Bremen, N.Y.

Roth, Shirley Ann Swartzendruber, 75, Scottdale, Pa., died March 13, of kidney failure. Spouse: Kermit D. Roth. Parents: Jacob and Emily Swartzendruber. Children: Timothy, Ronald, Laura Roth Howard; six grandchildren. Funeral: March 16 at Robert B. Ferguson Funeral Home, Scottdale.

Sands, Lila Brenneman, 85, Delavan, Ill., died Feb. 17. Spouse: Russell Sands. Parents: Jacob and Leone Seaton Brenneman. Children: Douglas, Gale Rogers, Steven; four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 22 at Hopedale Mennonite Church, Hopedale, Ill.

Sarfarzi, Faith Ann Stahl, 53, Ocala, Fla., died Feb. 26, of a blood clot. Spouse: Moshen Sarfarzi. Parents: William M. and Joann Kleinsasser Stahl. Children: Ariana, Parisa, Cameron. Funeral: March 6 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Smoker, Calvin L., 82, Honey Brook, Pa., died March 10. Spouse: Mabel D. Zook Smoker (deceased). Parents: Reuben and Anna Lapp Smoker. Children: C. Richard, Beverly Smoker, Ronald L., Larry Q., Mona Lu Shuman; 10 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 17 at Tel Hai Chapel, Honey Brook.

Stauffer, Frances Lucile Christophel, 102, Goshen, Ind., died March 16. Spouse: Earl R. Stauffer (deceased). Parents: Elmer and Mary Hartman Christophel. Children: Norman Clair, Loren Alan; six grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 21 at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Sommer, Ann Kaiser, 89, Hopedale, Ill., died July 31, 2013. Spouse: Clarence N. Sommer (deceased). Parents: Benjamin and Anna Plattner Kaiser. Children: Allan Sommer, Dr. Brian Sommer, Diane Milosevich; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 4 at Hopedale Mennonite Church.

Suter, Kathryn "Kate" Landis, 87, Bridgewater, Va., died March 12. Spouse: Eldon L. Suter (deceased). Parents: John and Pauline Landis. Children: Donna Clayton, Diana Berkshire, Joy Halterman, Eldon "Eldie," Jewel Knicley; nine grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Memorial service: March 24 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

Thomas, Coevel W., 88, Telford, Pa., died March 20. Spouse: Marie Miller Thomas (deceased). Parents: Elmer and Elda Livingston Thomas. Children: Karen Loker, Lois Thomas, Bruce; four grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 23 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Wittrig, Marie Moushon, 95, Hopedale, Ill., died Feb. 22. Spouse: Glenn W. Wittrig (deceased). Parents: George W. and Mary Wyss Moushon. Child: Rena Schaefer; four grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Feb. 25 at David Mortuary, Hopedale.

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RESOURCES

Mapping Exile and Return: Palestinian Dispossession and a Political Theology for a Shared Future by Alain Epp Weaver (Fortress Press, 2013, $39) offers a political theology of redrawing Palestine compatible with a binational vision for a shared Palestinian-Israeli future.

Jacob's Choice: Return to Northkill, Book One by Ervin R. Stutzman (Herald Press, 2014, $29.99) is the first book of a trilogy of Amish historical fiction. Based on actual events, it tells the story of one man's pursuit of restoration that leads to a complicated romance, an unrelenting search for missing family members and an astounding act of reconciliation.

Living Thoughtfully, Dying Well by Glen Miller (Herald Press, 2014, $12.99) invites readers into conversation about the spirituality of dying and explores a variety of beliefs about death and dying.

Dare We Speak of Hope? Searching for a Language of Life in Faith and Politics by Allan Aubrey Boesak (Eerdmans, 2014, $18) meditates on what it really means to hope in light of present political realities and growing human pain in South Africa. It argues that hope comes to life only in situations of vulnerability.

Prophetic Rage: A Postcolonial Theology of Liberation by Johnny Bernard Hill (Eerdmans, 2013, $25) argues that prophetic rage, or righteous anger, is a necessary response to our culture of imperialism and nihilism. The most powerful way to resist meaninglessness, it says, is refusing to accept the realities of structural injustice,such as poverty, escalating militarism, genocide and housing discrimination.

Hauerwas: A (Very) Critical Introduction by Nicholas M. Healy (Eerdmans, 2014, $23) examines three main areas of theologian Hauerwas' thought and says his overriding concern for ethics and church-based apologetics so dominates his thinking that he systematically distorts Christian doctrine.

The Good of Politics: A Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Introduction by James W. Skillen (BakerAcademic, 2014, $22.99) draws from biblical sources and major streams of the Christian tradition in service of a distinctively positive vision of civic responsibility for our common life.

Who's Afraid of Relativism: Community, Contingency and Creaturehood by James K.A. Smith (BakerAcademic, 2014, $19.99) introduces the philosophical sources behind postliberal theology, such as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Richard Rorty and Robert Brandon, and offers a provocative analysis of relativism.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.30 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite*, call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email advertising@themennonite.org.

Want a website? We spent time, energy and money building beautiful church-specific WordPress themes so you can focus on your message. For more info about reasonably priced managed hosting plans, call 888-868-7099 or email **info@mennonite.net**.

Kalona Mennonite Church of Kalona, Iowa, a congregation of about 250 members, is seeking a **full-time associate pastor**. This person will serve alongside a lead pastor and have normal preaching and administrative responsibilities. Other duties include a focus on youth and young adult ministries as well as nurturing spiritual growth and faith commitment. Interested people can request a position description and congregational information by contacting Frank Yoder at franklin-yoder@uiowa.edu or conference minister Tim Detweiler at timdetweiler@centralplainsmc.org. All candidates must have an updated Ministerial Leadership Information Form (MLI) on file with Mennonite Church USA.

Accuracy, brevity, clarity. I do **editing/writing** of stories, articles and books. Contact **roseanne.b.stewart@gmail.com**.

Camp Deerpark is seeking a **construction supervisor** for our Children's Camp Village, which when completed will consist of eight cabins, a program center and pump house. The qualified candidate must be comfortable with nonconventional construction practices. While this is a supervisory position, the role requires extensive hands-on craftsmanship. Tasks include: operating woodmizer sawmill, excavating equipment, plumbing, etc. A three-year commitment is required. Compensation includes salary, medical and housing. Contact Ken Bontrager at 845-754-8669 or admin@campdeerpark.org.

Bethesda Mennonite Church, located in Henderson, Neb., is seeking a **full-time pastor** to be part of a multipastoral team. The candidate should have a strong commitment to Anabaptist values and theology along with strong preaching, communication and community outreach skills and interests. An M.Div. degree with pastoral experience is desired but not required. The Bethesda congregation, located in rural Nebraska, is a member of Central Plains Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA. Interested people should contact Central Plains Conference Minister, Tim Detweiler, P.O. Box 352, Kalona, IA 52247, or call 319-458-0224.

First Mennonite Church of San Francisco seeks a **half-time to three-quarter-time associate pastor** to partner with our pastor in serving our growing congregation. FMCSF is a vibrant, open and affirming, urban Anabaptist congregation of about 150, 20 percent of whom are children under the age of 18. Details: http://www.menno.org/.

Connexus Language Institute in South Korea seeks **university graduates to teach elementary school students English** while living in Christian community. One- to two-year commitment. Round-trip airfare provided. Email master@connexus.co.kr.

Covenant Mennonite Fellowship in Sarasota, Fla., seeks **half-time pastor**. We are a small, intellectually engaging and welcoming church. Our congregation seeks to live historic Anabaptist values—peacemaking, community and following the way of Jesus—with progressive Christian attitudes. Mennonite with M.Div. preferred. We are in process of joining Central District Conference. Contact Lois Kaufman at 800-662-2264 or confmin@mcusacdc.org.

Are you the one God has been preparing for us? **Fairview Mennonite Church** is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Located in rural northern Michigan, with weekly attendance around 100, the heart of FMC's vision is to build relationships in the community that meet people's needs. If you are interested in exploring possibilities at Fairview Mennonite Church, please email the search committee at fmcpastorsearch@gmail.com or call Don Haskin at 989-335-3153.

Calling all artists. **Greencroft Goshen** is requesting proposals from **artists** (any medium) who would suggest ways to use art to honor two sets of donors on the Greencroft Goshen campus. Budget is up to $20,000. Deadline for RFPs is Aug. 1. One donor recognition piece would have the names of 90 donors but would need to be expandable. A second donor recognition piece would be static (permanent) with 460 names. For the complete specs on these projects, contact JimN@greencroft.org.

Explore God's love with the new Shine Sunday school curriculum! **Shine: Living in God's Light** has engaging stories and activities that will teach children the Bible, understand that they are known and loved by God, and learn what it means to follow Jesus. Find sample sessions, Bible outlines and more at www.shinecurriculum.com.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read **Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

We are your spoiled, entitled brats

Peter Epp teaches Mennonite studies in Gretna, Manitoba. He can be reached at p_epp@hotmail.com

By now it seems self-evident that accountability isn't really my generation's forte. You've heard it before: We want the church to change, but even if it did, we probably wouldn't show up. We expect you to listen sensitively, but we expect to be independent. Surely, it must sometimes feel like we're a bunch of spoiled, entitled brats.

And maybe we are. But here's the reality: Like it or not, we are your spoiled, entitled brats. You raised us, after all.

Consider three of the guiding principles that most of us were raised on. They're far from the only principles you raised us on, but I think they hold some of the keys to understanding our differences. They are:

1. You can be anything you want to be, if you just put your mind to it.
2. Always be true to yourself, no matter what.
3. Never, ever forget the Golden Rule.

They're great principles, for the record. They've served us well. They explain our creativity, our entrepreneurial spirit and our commitment to social justice. But they also explain why we can be so excruciatingly difficult when it comes to accountability and church.

Let's start with the first principle: You can be anything you want. Out of the three, this one may indicate the biggest improvement from previous generations' parenting. At the same time, it may also be the biggest lie. While on the one hand it represents the beautiful ways you gave us nearly unlimited opportunities, it's also something we couldn't live up to. Sure, we're mostly fine with our teaching, nursing and carpentry jobs, but we could have been the next Gandhi—if only we'd put our minds to it. So we avoid criticism and with it accountability because we're already terrified that we're not living up to our potential.

> We avoid criticism and accountability because we're already terrified that we're not living up to our potential.

While the you-can-do-it principle left us overly sensitive to accountability, the second—always be true to yourself—has sometimes left us wondering why we need your version of accountability at all. Again, we've reaped huge benefits from this principle. We tend to have strong moral compasses. We tend to pay attention to those compasses and feel the need to follow them diligently. On the flip side, though, we're also accustomed to doing what is right because it feels right, not because someone else says we should. We don't do or commit to things because we're supposed to. That feels insincere to us, and, if we're being insincere, we're certainly not being true to ourselves. So, in that sense, we see accountability differently from previous generations. Your version of accountability—accountability to the community—strikes us as guilt-laden obligation, and obligations, to us, feel dishonest. In fact, I think we often feel like we're lying to you simply by showing up for church when we'd rather be sleeping in.

The third principle, admittedly, is as old as morality itself. We're far from the first generation to be raised on the Golden Rule. Still, in the context we've grown up in, it's produced unique results. While I assume the Golden Rule used to be applied to your little brother, your actual neighbor and maybe a needy person you passed on the street, we tend to apply it to larger social justice issues. We've grown up in a post-civil-rights society that measures someone's integrity by his or her treatment of underprivileged populations. Since the church hasn't always had the greatest track record with some of these issues, we're already uneasy. On top of that, our be-true-to-yourself ethic makes it hard for us to feel good about any discrimination-related compromises. So, where the church uses a process of mutual accountability to move slowly and deliberately through tough issues, my generation feels guilty committing to an institution that sees those issues as debatable at all.

Despite how different we can be across this generation gap, these differences also stem from our connection to one another. There are values and ideas we both share. We're just embodying some of those ideas in ways you may never have expected. As sensitive and self-conscious as we can be, we'll probably need to know that you understand this before we can take our first (and, in my opinion, desperately needed) baby steps back toward community accountability. Luckily, the principles that guided you as parents, even if they didn't always produce exactly what you expected, have shown you to be more than gracious enough to offer understanding. TM

Get ready for summer reading

Summer is coming, and for some that is a time for more relaxation, vacation trips perhaps. If it is also a time for extra reading, here are some books to consider.

Hutterites: *Pacifists in Chains: The Persecution of Hutterites During the Great War* by Duane C.S. Stoltzfus (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013, $29.95) documents the disturbing history of four pacifists imprisoned for their refusal to serve in World War I.

Stoltzfus, who is communication department chair at Goshen (Ind.) College, has done extensive research to unveil the antipacifist climate when the United States entered World War I and drafted men for the army. While noting the courage of the Hutterite men and their suffering, he refuses to romanticize them. Among the nuggets from his research, we learn that James Madison wanted to include in the Second Amendment a provision for conscientious objection to military service.

Constantine: In *Constantine Revisited: Leithart, Yoder and the Constantinian Debate*, edited by John D. Roth (Pickwick Publications, 2013, $24), 11 scholars, some of them Anabaptist, respond to Peter Leithart's book *Defending Constantine* (2010). The essays are gracious yet clear in countering Leithart's arguments, point by point. The book helps us learn more about the early church and the clear change that occurred with the rule of Constantine in the fourth century A.D.

Sexuality: An important resource in the ongoing discussion of same-sex relationships is *Bible, Gender, Sexuality: Reframing the Church's Debate on Same-Sex Relationships* by James V. Brownson (Eerdmans, 2013, $29).

Brownson critiques both traditionalist and revisionist readings and asks, "What is the moral vision regarding gender and sexuality that Scripture commends?"

He carefully considers the biblical understanding of patriarchy, "one flesh," procreation and celibacy. Then he explores the "boundary language" of Romans 1:24-27, looking at the meanings of lust and desire, purity and impurity, honor and shame, and nature.

Brownson makes the point that "what is normal in Scripture is not necessarily normative." For example, the sun going around the earth and slavery are normal in Scripture.

He uses the concept of "moral logic," which asks not only *what* is commanded and prohibited in Scripture but *why*. This helps us translate such commands across cultures.

Finally, Brownson looks at the "seven passages" commonly understood to refer explicitly to same-sex erotic relationships.

Disabilities: *Amazing Gifts: Stories of Faith, Disability and Inclusion* by Mark I. Pinsky (Alban Institute, 2012, $18) collects 64 stories of people with disabilities, their family members and their congregations.

Pinsky points out that the 2000 U.S. Census counted 54 million people with disabilities—one in six Americans—and that number has only grown since with many wounded Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans swelling the population.

"Faith is a powerful thing," writes Pinsky, "and children and adults with disabilities ... benefit from expressing it and being part of a community of family, friends and fellow believers who share it in worship."

The stories reveal three main barriers to full participation of people with disabilities: architecture, communication and attitude.

This is a helpful and needed resource that will help us all be more welcoming. TM

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

FILM REVIEWS

Noah (PG-13) is not your typical biblical epic. Director Darren Aronofsky takes liberties with the text and creates an imaginative story that includes some sci-fi elements and intense drama. Noah is a tragic figure. The film also serves as a parable about the dangers of human domination over nature.—*Gordon Houser*

Cesar Chavez (PG-13) tells the story of the famed civil rights leader and labor organizer torn between his duties as a husband and father and his commitment to securing a living wage for farm workers. It serves both to inform those unfamiliar with this movement and to inspire people to seek just wages for workers. It is especially relevant today, when corporations and government seek to dismantle unions, and wages are declining rapidly.—*gh*

Divergent (PG-13) is another big-budget movie based on a young adult sci-fi novel with a young female lead. It does not measure up to *Hunger Games* but is worth seeing in order to discuss it with teen viewers. It addresses the impact of virtual reality testing, identity in social groups and whether pacifism is a viable societal solution. Halfway through, though, it regresses into a typical thriller with faulty plot lines.
—*Anna Groff*

BOOK REVIEWS

The Awakening of Hope: How We Practice a Common Faith by Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove (Zondervan, 2012, $14.99) looks at seven ancient Christian practices and how they nurture a faith that leads to action. Wilson-Hartgrove uses narrative in a way that engages readers.—*gh*

Following Jesus: The Heart of Faith and Practice by Paul Anderson (Barclay Press, 2013, $17) presents radical Christian discipleship from an evangelical Quaker perspective. Anderson wants to present Christians' "highest common purpose." More stories illustrating his points would have made it more engaging.—*gh*

(Continued from page 5)

I want to express dismay at the Easter article. I applaud the authors' attempt to comprehend the incomprehensible. But Andrea Lommen says, "You are God, and God is you. … It also means you are God just like the next person to you." That, of course, is total untruth.—*Stan Weaver, Glendale, Ariz.*

Self-fulfillment not ultimate value

In the March issue, C. Norman Kraus asks us to reframe the LGBT issue and put people ahead of issues. I propose we try a balance of Scripture and people while we talk about marriage. In another article, 150 signatories call for change in church policy to recognize gay couples as married on an equal basis, based on the fact that the Holy Spirit falls on gay and straight alike. This is true, but the Holy Spirit also falls on military officers like Cornelius today, but that does not change what Jesus taught about loving our enemies. In 16th-century Europe, the king's authority was the ultimate social value.

Today, individual self-fulfillment is the ultimate value, and, consistent with this ultimate concern, our culture has turned marriage into a commodity rather than a sacrament. As a commodity it needs to be available to all, but if we hold to family and the faith community as ultimate, then we cannot agree with a consensus that seems to assume having sex to be a basic human right. As a sacrament we're dealing with mystery and holy fire. See www.galileanfellows.org/page/4/. —*Philip E. Friesen, Minneapolis*

Learning from Lederach

Paul M. Lederach (Obituaries, March) was the conference minister who, in 1986, faced the situation at Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church, where the first openly gay person had been accepted as a full member. In 2003, he showed me in a presentation how Paul dealt with the circumcision controversy, which was extremely divisive in the early church. Then he compared that early controversy to the present-day controversy regarding same-sex relationships—making the case for inclusion. Lederach was honored at a memorial service in the very same community from which the young man migrated to our city in 1986, asking for acceptance in our congregation after he had been alienated in his home church. Urban Mennonite congregations are all too commonly challenged with figuring out how to relate to these victims, who come to us with their heartrending stories of expulsion.—*Melvin D. Schmidt, Hyattsville, Md.*

What would Jesus do?

Members of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board seem to think "the church's organizational structure and official agreements" are more important than Mountain States Mennonite Conference's "sincere desire to follow Christ" ("Excerpt from EB Statement," March). Do they think congregations and conferences cannot be trusted to discern God's will? That is sad (and perhaps not very Anabaptist). I have observed that the congregations who are "welcoming and inclusive" are busy doing God's work in their communities. I also don't understand why congregations say they will leave if everyone does not believe exactly what they do. I wonder, What *would* Jesus do? Maybe ask us to simply disagree in love? If we could do that, we sure would have a lot more time and energy to share God's good news.—*Joyce Hostetler, Goshen, Ind.*

I wonder if now is one of those times when we must listen more and talk less, especially those older and the men. I pray for those in leadership as they wrestle with the issue of LGBT members in the church. I was moved by Issac Villegas' cover article and his column, "Stay With Us" (April), and Anna Groff's courage. How can we exclude anyone who looks to Jesus and says, "Remember me"? WWJD may be hackneyed, but it's still our common calling.—*Joe Haines, Amherst, N.Y.*

I thank Villegas for his understanding of the invitation, "Stay with us." I thank him also for recognizing the love LGBT has for the Mennonite Church USA in spite of how we have pushed them away. I pray we continue to learn love from each other.—*Marilyn M.R. Yoder, Archbold, Ohio*

Knowing someone who is LGBT

What I share here is not a position for either side but a plea for a rational approach to the changes we are seeing.

Part of my grieving has to do with the hypocrisy and imbalance surrounding the issue. Take the issue of divorce and remarriage. There are currently n sermons and conferencewide declarations stating that those who have been divorced and remarried are to be disbarred from church membership. Yet Jesus spoke sternly on that issue. The same goes for those who have served in the military. I think the reason there is such an outrage about homosexualit is that so few people relate to it. My estimate is that around 5 percent of population is gay. So when pastors deliver pious sermons against the evils o homosexuality, they are essentially talking to those who are not tempted i that area. Before church people get so morally invested in the topic of homosexuality, I would recommend that the actually get to know a gay person, particularly a gay Christian.—*Tim Schultz Monroeville, Pa.*

Shenandoah Confession

I want to express my appreciation for the Shenandoah Confession (April). I pray that we may all be able to freely and unconditionally come to the Table of our Lord. The process that Mennonite Church USA is putting forth on same-sex relationships will not bring us together. The confession can be much more helpful if we can "confess together" without needing to agree on the current issues that divide us. —*David Helmuth, Goshen, Ind.*

Things that are difficult to talk about

Some things are hard for us to talk about in public. At times we refer to them as "the elephant in the room," the anxiety-ridden topics we cannot comfortably broach around certain people or situations. These elephants may crowd the pulpit in church, just as they inhabit our family living rooms and lumber about in the public square.

In the midst of the current debates about human sexuality, and especially same-sex relationships, I often hear reference to the sentence in Article 19 of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*—"We believe that God intends marriage to be a covenant between one man and one woman for life." I heartily support that commitment and note that the *Confession* goes on to say: "According to Scripture, right sexual union takes place only within the marriage relationship." This, too, I affirm. It highlights the church's commitments to celibacy for the unmarried and sexual fidelity for those who are married.

Whereas we've often referred to homosexuality as the "elephant in the room," I wonder if an even bigger elephant in the room has to do with the many ways we fail to live up to the stated norms of celibacy and fidelity. For example, it seems that we are hesitant to publically address the incest that plagues our church families, the sexual abuse of women and children in our congregations, the hookup culture that lures our teenagers, the problems with sexually transmitted diseases, the practice of couples living together before marriage, addiction to pornography, or the infidelity that breaks up marriages.

Let me be clear—having an elephant in the room doesn't mean there's no talking going on. There may be plenty of whispering, gossiping, finger-pointing accusations, under-the-breath muttering and even sorrowful lament of shortcomings to a confidant. But it's difficult to have a public discussion about these matters, even in church. It's much safer to live with a "don't ask, don't tell" approach.

Why? Is it because most of us realize we fall short of God's highest calling, and we don't want others pointing their fingers at our failures any more than they want us pointing our fingers at theirs? Or is it because the church's stated confessions no longer reflect our heartfelt convictions? Does our silence suggest that we no longer expect celibacy, a standard the church has expected from singles—whether never married or formerly married—for generations? Have we come to accept the societal assumption that the regulation of one's sexual desires is outdated and potentially harmful?

The statements on human sexuality adopted at Saskatoon (1986) and Purdue (1987) were adopted more than a generation ago, before the widespread use of the Internet or social media. The immediacy and accessibility of social media has introduced immense changes in the way we communicate with each other, even about the most intimate spaces in our lives.

Where then is the place to have meaningful public conversations about life-giving intimacy and genuine interpersonal relationships, with encouragement to love and to be loved in keeping with God's intent? Too often, in its preoccupation with "shoulds" and "ought nots," the church has not been a healthy place for that discussion.

Over the past few years, we have spent a disproportionate amount of time discussing homosexuality, creating an imbalance of the church's public voice on sexual matters. In light of the current debate on same-sex relationships, our youth could easily get the mistaken impression that church people only engage in same-sex relationships.

I'm not suggesting that we set aside the difficult and divisive topic of same-sex unions in the church. I'm simply saying that we need to spend a much greater proportion of our time discussing the nature of healthy heterosexual relationships and the ethical behaviors we expect to live by as followers of Jesus, whether single or married. Sometimes, the hardest topics to address reveal our greatest need for God's healing touch. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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FROM THE EDITOR

FAQs for *The Mennonite*

Anna Groff

We are especially interested in personal stories of Mennonites exercising their faith.

As interim editor of *The Mennonite* since February, I have received many questions regarding our publication, its purpose, who it serves and more. In this editorial, I address some of the frequently asked questions (FAQs).

What is the purpose of *The Mennonite*? Mennonite Church USA established three purposes for publication: (1) to provide a forum for the voices within the denomination, (2) to promote the ministries of Mennonite Church USA and (3) to offer an editorial voice distinct from but collaborative with other leadership voices. It serves and is owned by members of Mennonite Church USA through the delegate body. The Mennonite, Inc., publishes content across three media: a monthly print magazine, two free ezines (*TMail* and *Meno Acontecer*) and a website, www.themennonite.org.

What is the *The Mennonite*'s relationship to Mennonite Church USA? *The Mennonite* is an entity of Mennonite Church USA, not a churchwide agency. This offers some separation between *The Mennonite* and Mennonite Church USA leadership.

What about the relationship to the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board? The Executive Board appoints three members of our board of directors. A representative of the Mennonite Church USA communications office is permitted as a nonvoting observer at all directors' meetings, except executive sessions of the board. That person is Hannah Heinzekehr.

How is the publication funded? Mennonite Church USA bylaws require *The Mennonite* to be a "self-supporting entity." We are funded primarily through paid subscriptions, as well as donations and print and web advertising. Our new website—launching this fall—will offer a viewer-friendly PDF of the print magazine to nonsubscribers for a donation each month in the amount of his or her choice. Otherwise only a select amount of material from the print magazine will be available for free on our new website.

How do you decide what to print? Many o our pieces are unsolicited. We make an effort to include pieces by women, underrepresented racial/ethnic people, young adults and other writers from across the United States. Send your submissions to editor@themennonite.org or annag@themennonite.org.

What kind of articles are you looking for

We wish to publish articles that help our reac ers glorify God, grow in faith and become agents of healing and hope in the world. We are especially interested in personal stories of Mennonit exercising their faith. Writing should be concise, accessible to the general reader and with strong lead paragraphs.

In March, someone wrote on our Facebook page that *The Mennonite* is "doctrinally confusing" on the sexuality issue, citing that we ran an article by a gay man who is committed to abstinence as well as an article calling for LGBT inclusion in Mennonite Church USA. A variety of perspectives on this issue and other issues is pr cisely what we seek to publish, as *The Mennonit* is intended to serve as a "forum for the voices within the denomination."

Why do you use "LGBT" instead of "homosexual," "gay" or "LGBTQ"? The initialism LGBT, in use since the 1990s, refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. The Assoc ated Press, whose stylebook is widely used by many news organizations, including *The Mennonite*, restricts the use of "homosexual." At this point, we do not use the Q, which stands for "queer" or "questioning," as LGBT is most frequently seen in current usage.

Who do I call with a question about my subscription or about advertising in *The Mennonite*? Please call 800-790-2498.—*ag*

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- A spiritual pilgrimage by bicycle
- But we didn't mean you
- Bread or recipe?
- The top 10 influential Mennonites
- Social means more than 'chit chat'

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite*, 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

'Tragic vision'

John D. Roth's "From Tragedy to Apocalypse" (May) presents an insightful view of current struggles with LGBT issues. He makes a useful comparison with classical tragedy, and I agree with his basic vision. But he tends to dismiss classical "tragedy" as an "agonizing, irresolvable moral conflict" and point to another way. There may be other possibilities.

I think of the classical Oedipus who married his mother—not a sin of choice but of "fate" or of ignorance, due to circumstances; he could not have known her identity. I think of Job, suffering on an ash heap through no fault of his own, but railing against his fate to his "three friends" and demanding justice from an absent Almighty. Both Oedipus and Job are condemned and isolated by their self-righteous communities: Oedipus' community chorus and Job's three "friends." Both are honored for their honest struggle and endurance. The hurt may still exist, but the accused are restored, and community healing begins. So may it be for us: both Aristotle's "tragic vision" and Roth's "apocalypse."— *Wilbur Birky, Goshen, Ind.*

Teaching versus speculation

Regarding the article "Easter Beyond Explanation" (April): We are better served by focusing on what Scripture actually teaches as opposed to theological sounding speculation. The article states that "we are all divine. … You are God. … God is human."

These statements are not consistent with sound biblical doctrine; for example, see Romans 3:23 and Isaiah 55:9. If we were truly equal with God, there would have been no need for Jesus Christ to have been born of a virgin, live a sinless life and die for our sins.

On the topic of the Resurrection, the article also states the possibility that it didn't actually happen or that Jesus was merely "resuscitated." Again, these thoughts are not aligned with biblical teaching. The Gospels vividly describe the horrific crucifixion of Jesus, his death on the cross, his burial and his glorious resurrection. This happened in fulfillment of the many Old Testament prophesies concerning the promised Messiah, who would come and save us from our sins, as stated in Isaiah 53:5.

Scripture points to the simple yet profound message of salvation. These are the truths of Scripture we should meditate on.—*Randy Zehr, Columbus, Ind.*

Good News is refreshing

On the evening before Easter, I longed to hear Jesus. The first words of Jesus in Matthew are in response to John the Baptist's reluctance to baptize Jesus, "Let it be so now, it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus' second sentence includes "but from every word that comes from the mouth of God." Jesus' last words in Matthew, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (All quotes from the NIV). Then is the Great Commission.

What a feeling of peace as I meditated on these words of Jesus the day after Good Friday and the day before the celebration of Jesus' Resurrection. They are so much more refreshing and soul nurturing than reading the opinions and ideas of humans. I repent and believe the Good News.—*Carl L. Smeltzer, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Is God in the conversation?

Given our long practice of nurturing and calling people to leadership positions from within the congregation, it should surprise no one that congregations who have members with an LGBT orientation might, sooner or later, identify and call forth those gifted for leadership. Natural as the process may be in our polity, some now see this as a point of crisis. In response, even though Jesus warned against it, we seem much more comfortable with judging than with facing each other in extended, open and honest conversation. Opting for a traditional Mennonite approach to problem-solving, we are not more discerning and wise, just more divided. Leadership is being called to make decisive statements, but leadership itself should be doing the calling. The call is to become a constituency with the guts to face one another, speak honestly, listen carefully and persevere as long as it takes to sense together the guidance of God. Leadership should invest resources and trained facilitation in regional, conference and local groups of un-like-minded Mennonites to embrace this challenge. Some will object that they are tired of talking, but I suspect our tiredness is miniscule compared with God's weariness with our whining, while simultaneously, we won't commit to doing the hard work of discernment (Hebrews 5:14). Is God in this conversation? If we believe so, then we must hold the disparate voices together in disciplined conversation. If we turn our backs on one another, neither the world nor the church will have gained one iota of wisdom, and God's grace, like our body, will once again be broken. *—Don Rheinheimer, Lombard, Ill.*

Ecumenical dialogue an option

I'm wondering if we can reframe our current anxiety over issues of sexuality into an ecumenical dialogue and partnership. Can we focus on points of convergence instead of one issue of divergence? We have the model of partnering together since 1920 in the mission and service of Mennonite Central Committee. Relief, service, peace and justice are the building blocks of this focused coalition of Anabaptist groups in North America. What holds us together is our common commitment to Christ. We give witness in word and deed through an Anabaptist theology and missional ecclesiology. We seek local and global partnerships while remaining true to our core identity. We are voluntarily accountable to one another, just as we are in our congregational life together. A congregational polity within an ecumenical framework allows us the breathing room to be who God calls us to be while providing the vehicle for greater partnerships. The structure serves our common mission and identity, not the other way around. I hope and pray that Mennonite Church USA can find a way forward that helps us be salt and light and a city on a hill in those communities where we live, work and worship.*—Jim S. Amstutz, Akron, Pa.*

Glimpses of the truth

In regard to LGBT people and Mennonite Church USA, the issues are many and also complex. The conservatives have some glimpses of the truth. And also, the liberals have some glimpses of The Truth. It is also important to recognize that any *one* glimpse of truth—isolated by itself—is a tricky thing.

On the one hand, it is an essential piece of the truth and needs to be acknowledged as such. On the other hand, one glimpse of truth is a half-truth. It is only part of the picture. Both conservatives and liberals are holding onto half-truths and thus polar-

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

Unlike many of our cover stories, which highlight God's work in the life of one individual, this issue's cover story features over a dozen Mennonites. The article provides brief interviews with 14 individuals from a church in Virginia who regularly redirect a portion of their war taxes to "life-giving causes." While Tax Day in the United States is April 15, a response to the dilemma of paying war taxes is something we can consider year round. What strikes me most about the testimonies on pages 12-17 is the variety of ages, careers, families and life stages featured. There is not a one-size-fits-all solution, and I admire the creativity and dedication involved.

Martin Shupack and Mark Thiessen Nation offer their thoughts on same-sex marriage on pages 22-29. A goal of *The Mennonite* editors is to include a variety of voices on the issue of LGBT inclusion. We are pleased that these two men, who are long-time friends, can model a Christian way of addressing this issue from two different perspectives.

At the Associated Church Press convention in April, *The Mennonite* won three awards—one of which was for our in-depth news coverage of the allegations of John Howard Yoder's sexual misconduct. We continue this coverage in this issue with an interview with James C. Juhnke, former professor at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., titled "The Decision to Disinvite John Howard Yoder to Speak." In a Q&A format on pages 44-46, Juhnke explains in detail his role in the decision to disinvite Yoder from his role as keyonte speaker at a conference on the Bethel campus and how it took place.

Finally, congratuations to the 1,148 graduates of the four Mennonite colleges and one seminary who celebrated commencements in April and May.*—Editor*

"FREE AMERICA FROM THE TYRANNY OF OIL" OBAMA '08
MENNONITES FOR PEACE

photo provided

Mennonites in San Francisco celebrate Earth Day

Members of First Mennonite Church of San Francisco participated in a Rally Against Climate Change on Earth Day, April 19, in San Francisco.—*Jim Musselman*

The Mennonite wins first place for Phoenix 2013 convention coverage

CHICAGO—*The Mennonite* won an Award of Excellence (first place) for convention/meeting coverage at the Associated Church Press convention April 23-25 in Chicago.

TheMennonite
Walls will fail

It won for its coverage in the August 2013 issue, "Walls Will Fail: Stories and Photos from Phoenix 2013."

Gordon Houser, associate editor, won an Award of Merit (second place) in the seasonal article category for his feature article "When God Became a Baby" in the December 2013 issue.

The Mennonite also won an Honorable Mention in the in-depth news coverage category for several articles on John Howard Yoder.—*TMail*

Goerzen named campus pastor at Bethel College

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—Peter Goerzen has been named campus pastor at Bethel College. He begins that role, along with that of director of church relations, in July. He replaces Dale Schrag, who is retiring after 30 years at Bethel.

Goerzen will end his current position, as a pastor at Grace Hill Mennonite Church in rural Newton, Kan., where he has been since 2009.

Goerzen graduated from Bethel in 2007 with a degree in computer science. He worked as a software developer and system administrator at Excel Industries in Hesston from 2007-09.

When Goerzen's wife, Katherine, started at Grace Hill as youth pastor in 2007, Goerzen "tagged along as a youth sponsor," he says. In 2009, he became a co-pastor with Katherine. He was ordained in 2011.

As a Bethel student, Goerzen helped pioneer what was then a new ministry for Bethel, that of student chaplain, serving for two years. Part of his role as campus pastor will be to work with the student chaplains.

Goerzen has also studied at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., and the North Newton-based Great Plains Extension of AMBS. He has completed nearly all required hours for a Master of Divinity degree and plans to graduate in 2015.
—*Bethel College*

New edition of *Extending the Table* released

HARRISONBURG, Va., and KITCHENER, Ont.—*Extending the Table* cookbook, the second in the World Community Cookbook series commissioned by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and published by Herald Press, is being rereleased with new recipes and many more color photos than in the original edition.

An estimated 122,000 copies of *Extending the Table* are in circulation, a testament both to readers' and cooks' interest in broadening their worldviews through what they eat and to changing times.

When *Extending the Table* cookbook first came out, in 1991, many of the recipes were unfamiliar to cooks and families in North America. Today an ethnically diverse array of restaurants and food trucks serve up dishes in urban centers as well as smaller towns. Home cooks have favorite recipes for pad Thai, enchiladas, curry and more.

The new edition includes regional menus, gluten-free and vegetarian tags on recipes, new dishes (including some from countries not represented before) and numerous photos of prepared dishes to help those who are unfamiliar with the food. More than 120 cookbook users helped choose which recipes made the cut for the revised cookbook.
—*MennoMedia*

MDS ends long-term response in Bastrop, Texas

BASTROP, Texas—Mennonite Disaster Service has ended its response in Bastrop County after three fall and winter seasons of work in the Central Texas community. The response included a group of long-term volunteers who live in their own RVs and a site where short-term and long-term volunteers are housed by MDS.

Over 1,000 volunteers took part in

the effort between November 2011 and April 2014. During that time, over 80 different home sites were cleared of burned trees and debris from burned homes, and volunteers installed skirting, porches and ramps for fire survivors who replaced their burned out homes with manufactured housing.

Working with the Bastrop County Long Term Recovery Team, MDS built 21 new homes from the foundation up and helped four other clients finish their rebuilds with roofing, foundation and drywall work. Funds from BCLTRT that MDS managed totaled almost $750,000. The work of the MDS volunteers leveraged those funds into structures whose market value would exceed $2.2 million.—*MDS*

Greek Catholics in Ukraine restore Mennonite church building

KITCHENER, Ontario—In Ukraine, a former Mennonite church building is being restored and transformed—with the help of Canadian Mennonites—into a Greek Catholic church.

This development, according to observers, is an example of Mennonite-Catholic collaboration in the spirit of other exchanges over the past decade.

The Mennonite church in the former village of Schoensee (now Snegurovka) was originally built in 1909. During the post-October 1917 revolution Soviet era, when Mennonites were forced to leave, the building was used for storage and fell into disrepair.

Recently the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine secured ownership of the building and a retired Catholic priest from the Czech Republic, Father Peter Trenzky, is giving leadership to the restoration as well as to the congregation, which has started to worship in the building.

In learning about the restoration project, individuals associated with the Mennonite Centre in nearby Molochansk (formerly Halbstad) offered to help. Friends of the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine, a Canadian-based charity, provided partial funding to the project over the past year.—*Mennonite World Conference*

Goshen College photo

'Fast Jason' makes his mark in Frisbee

Jason Yoder, a 2008 Goshen (Ind.) College graduate and doctoral student at Indiana University, is a member of the Indianapolis AlleyCats, a professional Ultimate team that formed in 2012. Known as "Fast Jason" among friends and fans, Yoder studied mathematics and computer science at Goshen.—*Goshen College*

Mennonite campus pastors meet in Bluffton

BLUFFTON, Ohio—Campus pastors at Mennonite colleges and universities met at Bluffton University April 8-10 to share ideas about ministry on their respective campuses and to support each other in prayer.

They represented several North American Mennonite institutions, including Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.; Bethel College, North Newton, Kan.; Goshen (Ind.) College, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind.; and Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario.

The group also attended sessions on Bluffton's annual civic engagement day, including an address by keynote speaker Nina Davuluri, Miss America 2014, who spoke on cultural diversity in America.—*Bluffton University*

Elizabeth Hostetter, EMM worker, remembered

HARRISONBURG, Va.—Elizabeth Hostetter, an Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) worker who served over 22 years in Eastern Africa, was remembered at a memorial service at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community in Harrisonburg, Va., on May 7. She was 87.

The service celebrated her life, her love of travel, and her deep faith.

She began overseas service with Mennonite Central Committee in 1952 at a children's home in the Netherlands. In March 1960, she started service as an EMM missionary at the Mennonite bookstore in Ethiopia. After serving there four years and four months, she transitioned to serving as hostess at the Mennonite Guest House in Nairobi, Kenya. She remained in that role for 16 years.—*EMM*

Albuquerque Mennonite receives JoinHands grant

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M.—Albuquerque Mennonite Church received a $40,000 grant through Mennonite Men's Join Hands program in February.

The funds will be used to insulate and repair a 60-year-old roof, rewire lighting and create access ramps compliant with the American with Disabilities Act. The congregation is hoping to match the grant over the next several years to do some landscaping and build a new exterior circulation corridor, which would create more space for an often-crowded sanctuary.

The congregation purchased the 9,000-square-foot church building in the fall of 2006, more than 18 years after organizing as a Rocky Mountain Mennonite Conference congregation in 1988. The group had initially gathered in homes, then in a seminar room at a local adoption agency, then in a Jewish Messianic synagogue and eventually in the basement of a United Methodist Church for 10 years.—*Mennonite Men*

Kudos!

Sara Dick
is pastor at Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

For years and years, friends recommended keeping a "gratitude journal" in which I could write—daily—things for which I'm grateful.

"You'll feel better," they promised. "It's a life-giving spiritual discipline," they insisted.

Nah.

My journal is for bellyaching, and I like it that way. I write a pleasant report now and then, but mostly I kvetch about what's difficult or disheartening in my life. I reread it from time to time, which is mostly a downer, unless I can summon up some gratitude that at least I'm not that distressed nowadays.

Then a 9-year-old kid moved in with me, and I had to tuck her in every night, not just when I felt like it. It didn't always go smoothly. I needed routines to help, and taking time at the end of the day to say our "thankfuls" seemed a good bedtime strategy.

I finally had my gratitude journal, but in a form that worked better for me than the daily journal entry that friends had so often recommended to me. That's the beauty and the challenge of spiritual disciplines: to find ways to stretch oneself toward the divine and simultaneously to honor one's particular humanity.

I saw that all the praying, the praising, the flirting, the gardening and the studying we do is to seek God's love for us and for all creation.

Even scientists have begun saying that gratitude is good for us. In one 10-week study, the participants who wrote in a weekly journal about gratitude were more optimistic and felt better about their lives than those who wrote about irritations or even those who wrote about events—good or bad—that had affected them. The gratitude-loggers "also exercised more and had fewer visits to physicians than those who focused on sources of aggravation" (*Harvard Mental Health Letter*, November 2011).

I certainly want to reap those benefits. But it can be difficult to add activities, even such obviously beneficial ones as expressing gratitude, to one's already busy or distracted life. A doctor's or pastor's recommendation only gets most of us so far—and often not far enough. We need the power of the Holy Spirit and the support of our friends, families and churches, too.

Two books have taught me well about spiritual practices of "being still and knowing that God is God." Stillness is not identical to practicing gratitude but is the grand oak under which the redbud of gratitude thrives. Just reading Marjorie Thompson's *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* in a coffee shop in downtown Elkhart, Ind., for a class I was taking at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., prompted a mystical experience of gratitude. I was overcome by God's love and by people's longing for that love. In that moment, I saw that all the praying, the praising, the flirting, the gardening and the studying we do is to seek God's love for us and for all creation, and I was profoundly grateful.

The second book is a new one by April Yamasaki that I checked out from our conference library: *Sacred Pauses: Spiritual Practices for Personal Renewal.* In her chapter "Paying Attention," Yamasaki shares an outline for the examen of consciousness that includes looking at your day with gratitude. She says this is usually easy for her, but take courage if you find it as difficult as I do.

A year after my kid and I began our nighttime litany of thankfulness, we began sharing something that was difficult in the day, too, to round out our bedtime examen. Adding a low point from the day helps us acknowledge what is life-sucking in a space where pain or fear can be held in loving prayer.

A few months later, I started writing a weekly list of kudos to my kid. After a month of this, I asked her to start doing the same, sharing at least three things I've done for which she's grateful. This has added up to a wellspring of gratitude in my life.

I'm not sure if I'm exercising more (probably not) or have fewer visits to the doctor (possibly so), but I am sure that I have become more anchored in assurance of God's abundant provision rather than in fear and scarcity-thinking that dominates much of our nation's public conversation.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

In this much-loved verse from the Gospel of John (1:5), I hear a 2,000-year-old assurance that good will not be overcome by evil, and gratitude need not be overcome by bitterness, if only we have eyes to see or ears to hear what God is doing for us. TM

A spiritual pilgrimage by bicycle

Each year, thousands of people from all around the world give up the familiar routines of work, the comforts of their homes and the convenience of their cars to walk the pilgrim's trail known as the Camino de Santiago. Carrying only what can fit into a backpack, these modern pilgrims travel by foot westward across northern Spain, sometimes for weeks on end, before arriving at their destination—the cathedral of Santiago de Compestela. (See the cover story in our February issue.)

The motives of these footweary travelers are undoubtedly varied. Some are merely adventure seekers, looking for a physical challenge or a simple change of scenery. But others are on a spiritual quest, hungrily seeking the face of God by slowing down their lives and practicing new forms of vulnerability.

Stories of pilgrims run deep in the Christian tradition. From Abraham and Sarah's departure from Ur to the Exodus out of Egypt, from the journeys of the early apostles to John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Christians have always recognized that God is revealed in a special way to refugees, to exiles, and to "strangers and pilgrims" (1 Peter 2:11).

On the evening of April 18, several dozen family and friends gathered at the main entrance to Goshen (Ind.) College to welcome three young wayfarers who were returning home from an epic pilgrimage. In May of the previous year, Abe Stucky, Levi Smucker and Michael Miller joined 17 classmates in Paraguay for a three-week, intensive Goshen College course on "Anabaptist History in Paraguay." But when the rest of the group returned by plane to the United States, the three young men mounted bicycles and began pedaling from the capital city of Asuncíon through the Paraguayan Chaco to Bolivia. Over the next 11 months, they made their way northward—along the Andes mountains in South America to the Panama Canal and through Central America, Mexico and the southern United States—before arriving in Goshen some 10,300 miles later.

As with pilgrims throughout the ages, the motives behind the journey were varied. They were hungry for adventure but also eager to become more fluent in Spanish and to experience the rich diversity of Latino cultures. And they had a special interest in learning more about the wide range of Mennonite groups that have taken root over the past century in Central and South America. Thus, their journey included visits with indigenous Quechua Mennonites in Peru and Bolivia; Latino Mennonite congregations in Colombia, Ecuador and Nicaragua; Beachy Amish groups in Costa Rica; and a variety of Low German "colony" Mennonites in Bolivia, Belize and Mexico. But the primary focus of their panamerican pilgrimage was, in the words of one young man, "to force ourselves to become vulnerable and look for the face of God in the people we met along the way."

In the course of their journey, they were transformed. We learned, one said, to adapt to a new understanding of time. A flat tire, an unanticipated village fiesta, a chance encounter with another traveler constantly "disrupted" the schedule. "But that meant every day was an adventure. As long as we were heading in the right direction, keeping to a tight schedule was not that important."

They also came to appreciate the gift of good conversation. Like countless pilgrims before them, the young men passed the time in their long journey by talking—with each other, of course, but especially with the strangers they met along the way. In each new setting, the travelers made it a point to listen carefully to the stories of their hosts, asking questions about their history, customs and convictions. Despite profound differences of perspective and culture, those conversations always revealed surprising glimpses of a shared humanity—the face of God suddenly made visible.

Perhaps most important, the journey gradually turned the vulnerabilities of each day into a spiritual discipline. Frequently, the travelers entered a small town at the end of a day not knowing where they would spend the night. Over time, they learned to rely on God's providence, usually expressed as the kindness of strangers: Catholic priests still practicing the ancient tradition of hospitality to pilgrims, Pentecostal pastors who turned their churches into hostels, firefighters who welcomed them into the fire station or dozens of newfound friends who simply opened their homes. "We return aware of the deep debts of hospitality that we have accumulated," they said. "We have no option but to share with others."

Perhaps the global church is best understood as people on a pilgrimage—taking time, sharing in conversation, practicing hospitality. TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

The journey gradually turned the vulnerabilities of each day into a spiritual discipline.

Be skeptical of those fast, definitive answers

This spread called Miscellany uses lots of numbers and often refers to the results of studies that draw certain conclusions. But how trustworthy are those studies? Should we accept their findings simply because they are "scientific"?

In an article in *Pacific Standard* (May/June) called "The Reformation," Jerry Adler asks these questions, particularly in regard to studies in the field of behavioral sciences.

He notes that "for the last several years, a crisis of self-confidence has been brewing in the world of experimental social science, and in psychology especially."

Papers have been retracted, and prominent researchers have resigned their posts, including Marc Hauser, an evolutionary psychologist and acclaimed author, and Diederik Stapel, a Dutch psychologist, "who admitted that many of his eye-catching results were based on data he made up."

Some scholars have tried to expose these problems through hoaxes. In 2011, a psychologist named Joseph P. Simmons and two colleagues wrote a paper hypothesizing that listening to The Beatles' "When I'm Sixty-Four" makes people younger. That paper actually appeared in the journal *Psychological Science*. It was a hoax.

This isn't just a problem for the academic community. "A whole industry has grown up around marketing the surprising-yet-oddly-intuitive findings of social psychology, behavioral economics and related fields," writes Adler. Think of TED talks, Malcolm Gladwell, the *Freakonomics* guys.

Many of us are complicit in this. We want fast, definitive answers. One person criticized TED talks for being simplistic. He did so by giving a simplistic TED talk.

Why do these scientists fake or manipulate their data? There is much pressure in the academic community for publishing cutting-edge material. There are incentives such as tenure, advancement, grants and prizes. And with fewer dollars available to fund research, scientists are loathe to spend the money and time to do an experiment and not get the results they want.

Often, people begin an experiment with a hypothesis. If their data doesn't quite support that hypothesis, they may keep at it until it does or simply alter the data.

Simmons points out that "psychologists who deploy enough statistical sleight of hand can find 'significance' in almost any data set."

One research psychologist, Brian Nosek, directs the Reproducibility Project, which reproduces certain experiments to see if they get the same results as those published. This doesn't necessarily disprove an experiment's findings, and it may even help refine its point. It may also turn up a failure that is glaring, and the paper must be retracted.

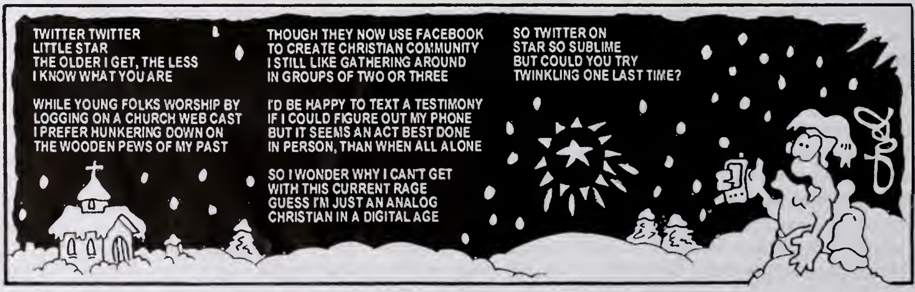
Adler notes that problems of fraud, statistical analysis and replication also apply to other fields. Biomedical research is one example. In search of new drugs, researchers at the pharmaceutical firm Amgen "selected 53 promising basic-research papers from leading medical journals and attempted to reproduce the original findings with the same experiments," Adler writes. "They failed approximately 9 times out of 10."

Those involved with the Reproducibility Project and other scientists are part of "a whole new approach to experimental social science, emphasizing cooperation over competition and privileging the slow accretion of understanding over dramatic, counterintuitive results," writes Adler.

He goes on to point out that "pretty much all scientific findings are tentative." The Apostle Paul said, "Test the spirits." Scientists need to keep testing their results.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann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LITTLE STAR
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WHILE YOUNG FOLKS WORSHIP BY
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I PREFER HUNKERING DOWN ON
THE WOODEN PEWS OF MY PAST
THOUGH THEY NOW USE FACEBOOK
TO CREATE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY
I STILL LIKE GATHERING AROUND
IN GROUPS OF TWO OR THREE
I'D BE HAPPY TO TEXT A TESTIMONY
IF I COULD FIGURE OUT MY PHONE
BUT IT SEEMS AN ACT BEST DONE
IN PERSON, THAN WHEN ALL ALONE
SO I WONDER WHY I CAN'T GET
WITH THIS CURRENT RAGE
GUESS I'M JUST AN ANALOG
CHRISTIAN IN A DIGITAL AGE
SO TWITTER ON
STAR SO SUBLIME
BUT COULD YOU TRY
TWINKLING ONE LAST TIME?
Joel

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—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “The First Amendment protects the right of every citizen to speak freely. It does not protect the right to give money to politics.”—Rabbi Justus Baird

Blacks, Latinos losing economic ground, says report

African-Americans and Latinos are losing economic ground when compared with whites in the areas of employment and income as the United States pulls itself out of the Great Recession, the latest State of Black America report from the National Urban League says.

The annual report, called “One Nation Underemployed: Jobs Rebuild America,” noted that the underemployment rate for African-American workers was 20.5 percent, compared with 18.4 percent for Hispanic workers and 11.8 percent for white workers. Underemployment is defined as those who are jobless or working part-time jobs but desiring full-time work.

The report also said African-Americans are twice as likely as whites to be unemployed. The unemployment rate for blacks was 12 percent in February, compared with 5.8 percent for whites.—*Associated Press*

85
Richest people in the world have as much wealth as the bottom half of the world's population,
3.5 billion
people.—*Oxfam*

Poverty ‘myths’ according to the Gates

1. Poor countries are doomed to stay poor. Not so, says philanthropist Bill Gates. In fact, “incomes and other measures of human welfare are rising almost everywhere, including in Africa.”

2. Foreign aid is a waste of money. People often cling to a few anecdotes about wasted aid money to claim it doesn't work, says Gates. To him, aid is a “fantastic investment” that saves and improves lives and lays the groundwork for long-term economic progress.

3. Saving lives leads to overpopulation. Actually, saving lives does the reverse, says Melinda Gates, noting that many poor families have extra children to make sure at least some survive.—*The Marketplace*

Advocates needed for the mentally ill

Donald Capps continues to teach a seminary course on mental illness even though he's officially retired. He believes pastors need to know more about the subject, as they will most likely have people with mental illness in their congregations. They can also suffer from it themselves. Capps urges pastors to serve as advocates for the mentally ill, especially when society is less willing to fund institutionalization of the mentally ill. A positive outcome of this deinstitutionalization trend is that more of the mentally ill are able to lead productive lives. But many others are adrift, homeless or living in substandard housing and are not getting the treatment they need.—*Christian Century*

Anti-Semitic incidents decline in U.S.

Continuing a decade-long drop, anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S. declined by 19 percent, according to the Anti-Defamation League's most recent annual audit. In 2013, the ADL counted 751 anti-Semitic incidents, a decline from the 927 incidents in 2012. Compiled since 1979, the ADL annual report includes assaults, vandalism and harassment targeting Jews.—*Religion News Service*

The Bluto Syndrome

According to a 2000 survey of college students, men overestimate how much muscle women find attractive. Muscle dissatisfaction in men strongly correlates with higher levels of depression and lower levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction.
—*Pacific Standard*

Voters favor prayer, minus Jesus

While the U.S. Supreme Court ruled May 5 in favor of allowing prayer at public meetings, a new survey finds U.S. voters clearly favor prayer—as long as the public prayer is generic and not specifically Christian.—*Religion News Service*

Numbers to ponder

- Hours a day the average American spends online with a computer: **2.3**
- Hours a laptop could be powered from the energy saved by recycling one aluminum can: **5.2**
- Aluminum cans recycled in 2012: **62 billion**
- Aluminum cans shipped by the U.S. Aluminum Industry in 2012: **92 billion**
- Percentage of American adults who text who admitted texting while driving: **47**
- Number of Americans that died in driving accidents due to cell phone use in 2012: **3,328**
- Pieces of mail processed by the U.S. Postal Service in 2012: **160 billion**
- Miles driven by U.S. Postal Service letter carriers and truck drivers annually: **1.3 billion**
- Number of career people employed by the U.S. Postal Service in 2012: **522,144**
- Tax money paid to the U.S. Postal Service for operations in 2012: **$0**
- U.S. cities expected to be affected by sea level rise in 2050: **315**
- Mayors who signed the “Resilient Communities for America” agreement for climate preparedness: **78**

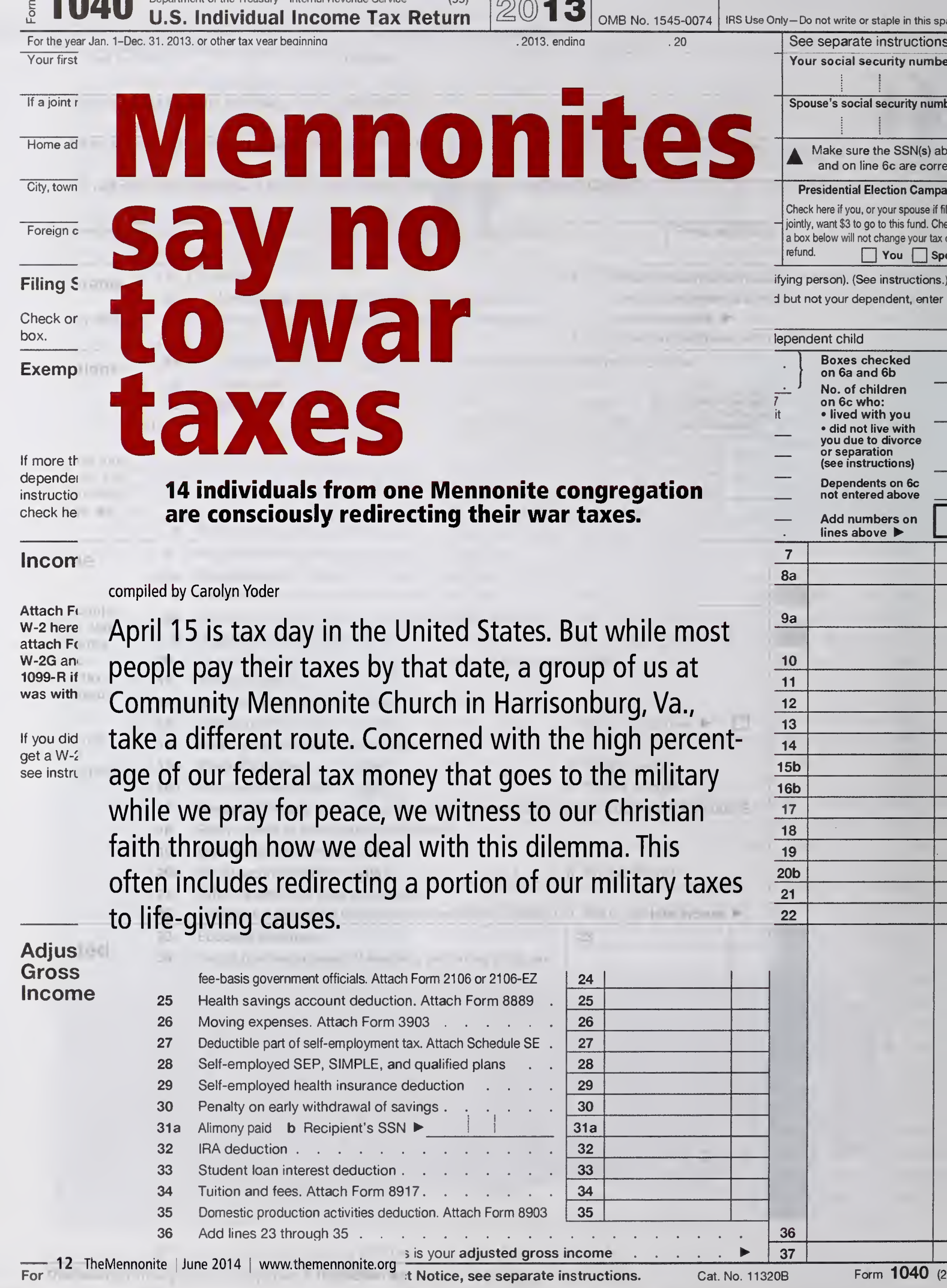
—*Yes! Magazine*

Mennonites say no to war taxes

14 individuals from one Mennonite congregation are consciously redirecting their war taxes.

compiled by Carolyn Yoder

April 15 is tax day in the United States. But while most people pay their taxes by that date, a group of us at Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va., take a different route. Concerned with the high percentage of our federal tax money that goes to the military while we pray for peace, we witness to our Christian faith through how we deal with this dilemma. This often includes redirecting a portion of our military taxes to life-giving causes.



1040 U.S. Individual Income Tax Return 2013 OMB No. 1545-0074 IRS Use Only—Do not write or staple in this spa

For the year Jan. 1–Dec. 31, 2013, or other tax year beginning , 2013, ending , 20

See separate instructions

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Your social security numbe

If a joint r

Spouse's social security numb

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Presidential Election Campa

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Adjus Gross Income

	fee-basis government officials. Attach Form 2106 or 2106-EZ	24	
25	Health savings account deduction. Attach Form 8889 .	25	
26	Moving expenses. Attach Form 3903	26	
27	Deductible part of self-employment tax. Attach Schedule SE .	27	
28	Self-employed SEP, SIMPLE, and qualified plans . .	28	
29	Self-employed health insurance deduction	29	
30	Penalty on early withdrawal of savings	30	
31a	Alimony paid b Recipient's SSN ▶	31a	
32	IRA deduction	32	
33	Student loan interest deduction	33	
34	Tuition and fees. Attach Form 8917	34	
35	Domestic production activities deduction. Attach Form 8903	35	
36	Add lines 23 through 35		36

s is your adjusted gross income . . . . . ▶ 37

For t Notice, see separate instructions. Cat. No. 11320B Form 1040 (2

Estimates of the share of the federal budget allocated to military spending are as high as 47 percent (www.warresisters.org/piechart.htm). Our congregation provides a letter of support that can be included with our tax returns and that backs our individual efforts.

We are not against paying taxes. In fact, some of us would willingly pay higher taxes if they supported education, health, infrastructure, sustainable and clean energy sources, bike paths or efforts to learn nonviolent ways to address complex domestic and international conflicts. That's why we prefer a term other than "tax resistance" to describe what we do.

And we don't think we have necessarily figured out the best way to exercise our constitutional freedom to live by our conscience when it comes to taxes. We're ordinary people on a journey. We offer here a summary of what we do in the hope that it will encourage others who take similar actions to share their experiences in their congregations and communities. We also hope it will inspire more people to consider this type of witness.

Nathan and Elaine Zook Barge

Nathan and Elaine Zook Barge, restorative justice specialist and STAR (Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience) director

How long have you engaged in an act witness through your taxes?

Over 30 years

Why do you do it?

Living and working in a Catholic and Mennonite community in Colorado Springs, Colo., in the early 1980s, we became aware of the dissonance between saying we were conscientious objectors to war while paying for war. Our commitment deepened during the 14 years we worked in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Guatemala with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). Many friends or their family members had been killed or wounded by U.S. weapons, and many people suffered hunger, homelessness and illness because money was used for weapons rather than for food, health and education.

> Along with the Salvadorans on the bus, we prayed for safety as guns from 10 U.S. helicopters strafed the area around us. That day, we became tax resisters for life.—Nathan and Elaine Zook Barge

Ironically, it was on tax day, April 15, 1985, that we experienced too closely the fear and trauma of war. Along with the Salvadorans on the bus, we prayed for safety as guns from 10 U.S. helicopters strafed the area around us. That day, we became tax resisters for life.

How do you do it?

It's a journey, finding the way that works for our stage of life. Early on, we withheld 50 percent of our taxable income and redirected it to MCC. Then for many years, we lived below the taxable level, first as a couple and then as a family of four. The past number of years, we have withheld a symbolic 10 cents for every $1 billion in the U.S. military budget and redirected that money for life-giving efforts rather than war. We also reduce our taxable income through charitable donations and deductions.

David Jost

David Jost, ESL Instructor

How long have you lived under the taxable level?

One year

How do you do it?

By making a small reduction in my paycheck to ensure that I owe no federal income tax.

Why do you do it?

Because I want to avoid financially supporting the U.S. military any way I can, and I believe that church institutions (such as Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, to which I contribute by reducing my paycheck) are better stewards of my money than the government.

Ray and Wilma Gingerich

Ray and Wilma Gingerich, retired peace and justice professor and retired hospice nurse

How long have you redirected a portion of your taxes?

Since 1976.

Why do you do it?

We are Mennonites (inheritors of a nonviolent way of life); we are followers of Jesus, who taught us to practice love toward our enemies. This is the explanation we give to the IRS. But our primary reason to resist the payment of military taxes is to witness to our church, to our Mennonite brothers and sisters. We are simply seeking to live lives consistent to the faith we profess. If we, the church, all those who profess Jesus as Lord of our lives, lived more like Jesus, faithfully refusing to pay for war, our country would not go to war. (That is a political fact.) How can we pray for peace while paying for war? On a more personal level, we taught our children (our own sons) not to join the military. Our two youngest sons are nonregistrants. How inconsistent then it would be for us as parents to pay others to prepare for war and to practice violence on our behalf!

Our primary reason to resist the payment of military taxes is to witness to our church, to our Mennonite brothers and sisters.—Ray and Wilma Gingerich

How do you do it?

We withhold payment of the military portion of our federal income tax (approximately 47 percent) and send that amount to life-giving organizations (e.g., our local congregation's compassion fund, Christian Peacemaker Teams and the National War Tax Resisters Coordinating Committee). A letter of explanation is sent to the director of IRS and included with our annual IRS report. Most importantly, copies of our letter to the IRS are sent to key Mennonite Church USA leaders and heads of organizations. With these letters, a handwritten note is included—an encouragement to promote the witness against the payment of military taxes.

Sue Klassen and John Zimmerman

Sue Klassen and Johann Zimmermann, public health nurse and structural engineer

How long have you redirected a portion of your taxes?

We have always kept our earnings low, not only for a lifestyle choice but to pay as little tax for military as possible. About eight years ago, when we came back from overseas with MCC and had taxable earnings, we started deducting taxes directly for military reasons.

Why do you do it?

We do it in order to inform our elected officials of our stand for peace. We send a statement to the local paper each year, and it has brought us into conversation with many different people from many walks of life about pacifist beliefs and peace initiatives.

How do you do it?

During the year, we underestimate our tax payments. Then when we have to pay what is due at the end of the year, we withhold a symbolic amount of 10 cents for every $1 billion that is annually spent on military funding, which adds up to approximately $80.

For the last five years, we have managed to not owe any federal taxes (beyond Social Security) by maxing out a variety of legal tax-break options, such as charitable giving, IRA investments and mortgage-interest deductions. One of us also only has part-time paid employment, which keeps taxable income lower.

Jennifer and Kent Sensenig

> Kent's parents lived in Vietnam for a decade during the U.S. military intervention into that civil war and saw firsthand the destructive consequences U.S. foreign policy can have.—Jennifer and Kent Sensenig

Jennifer and Kent Davis Sensenig, lead pastor at Community Mennonite Church and EMU adjunct professor

How long have you redirected a portion of your taxes or minimized what you owe?

About 15 years.

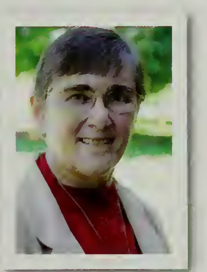
Why do you do it?

It is a small witness for peace, a part of our life of discipleship to Jesus Christ and a way of expressing that we seek a more just, peaceable and sustainable U.S. public policy. Kent's parents lived in Vietnam for a decade during the U.S. military intervention into that civil war and saw firsthand the destructive consequences U.S. foreign policy can have.

How do you do it?

For some of the early years of our marriage we withheld a symbolic portion of our taxes (less than $100), which provided a reason to send letters to our Congressional representatives, the President and the IRS, expressing our faith-based resistance to U.S. budgetary priorities vis-à-vis discretionary federal spending.

We're not always consistent. Some years we have withheld the entire percentage of federal taxes for military expenditures, and some years we have withheld a symbolic portion. Some years we have filed under protest and written letters.


Dorothy Jean Weaver

Dorothy Jean Weaver, seminary professor of New Testament

How long have you engaged in an act of witness through your taxes?

Thirty years or so.

How do you do it?

I got this idea years ago from an MCC info sheet. I split my tax monies and write two checks: 55 percent to the U.S. Treasury and 45 percent to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. I mail both checks to the IRS along with a letter, copied to my legislators, explaining why I am doing this. I also send a symbolic sum of $45 to MCC for their "taxes for peace" fund.

Why do you do it?

In the letter I say that as a follower of Jesus Christ I cannot in conscience pay the portion of my federal taxes that goes to military purposes. I note that I have no intention to avoid paying the money I owe to the federal government. I simply wish to designate that these funds go to a cause that is life-giving, not death-dealing. And I submit these checks as an expression of my freedom of religion, protected by the constitution, the freedom not to have to take an action that is contradictory to my Christian beliefs.

Anna and Ben Wyse and family

Anna and Ben Wyse, public health nurse and owner of Wyse Cycles, with their children Martha, Desmond and Sam.

How long have you been living below the taxable income level?

Since we got married, 13 years ago—with the exception of one year when we accidentally made a little too much money.

Why do you do it?

Living below the taxable income level is at some level an act rooted in helping us sleep at night.

Living below the taxable income level is at some level an act rooted in helping us sleep at night.
—Anna and Ben Wyse

One component of American militarism has to do with protecting our consumptive lifestyles. The uneven distribution of wealth and uneven consumption of resources are one factor that drives conflict both in some localized conflicts and some international conflicts. As Americans, we cannot help but participate in and benefit from the violent structures that underpin our economy and society. By living under the taxable level, we at least are attempting to reckon with the dissonance we experience between what we believe and the broken world in which we all live.

We often feel like this is sort of a token act that will never really make a difference. We also know there are still numerous ways that we are complicit in the machinery of violence that our society relies on. Despite all that, this is one of the important choices we have made about how to express faithfulness and a longing for a different kind of world.

How do you do it?

By bringing home one income. When Anna had a job, Ben did a lot of volunteer work, and when he worked for folks he asked them to donate to various nonprofits in lieu of payment for services. Now Anna is a full-time stay-at-home parent, and we live on Ben's income. We have to be careful with our budget, but we still live a far more abundant lifestyle than many of our neighbors in Harrisonburg and many of our global neighbors.

Rick and Carolyn Yoder

Rick and Carolyn Yoder, retired business and economics professor/semiretired international health systems consultant and psychotherapist

How long have you redirected a portion of your taxes?

Since we were married 38 years ago.

Why do you do it?

Our work has taken us to many countries where we have seen both the positive and negative effects of our tax dollars. Carolyn's work in psychosocial trauma healing often involves dealing with the fallout of violent conflict. We believe it's a moral issue that nearly half our taxes go to military spending and that we spend more than the next highest 15 countries combined on the military while cutting domestic spending on programs such as health care, education and the social safety net. Redirecting a portion of our taxes to life-giving causes helps reduce the gap between our stated values on peace and nonviolence and our actions.

The research on bystanders says that silence in the face of harm or wrongdoing emboldens harm-doers, leading them to assume others support and agree with them. Doing something, even something small, puts them on alert that someone has noticed and doesn't agree. We're not under the illusion that our letters and voice will change things, but it does change us. And knowing what we know, how can we be silent bystanders?

How do you do it?

We first take steps to ensure that we owe the IRS on April 15, rather than having a refund due us. Then we redirect a symbolic amount, a couple hundred dollars, from our federal income tax payments to the National Peace Tax Fund and MCC. We enclose a letter with our tax returns, stating what we are doing and why, with copies to the U.S. President, our legislators and our congregation. We also enclose a copy of the formal action taken by Community Mennonite Church to offer its support morally, financially and otherwise to its members.

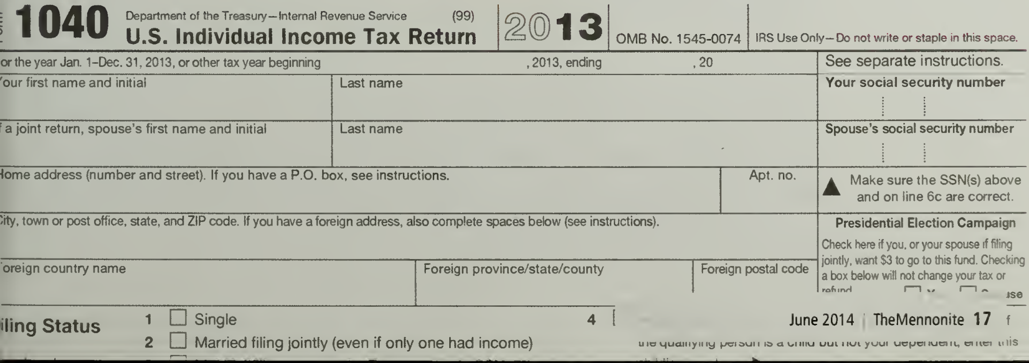
A question many people have for those of us who redirect our taxes to life-giving causes is about the consequences from the IRS. Sue and John's experience is typical: "We receive quarterly letters from the IRS each year, informing us that we owe them money. We respond to them with a letter restating our reasons. If in a given year we have prepaid too much tax, the money that we have withheld gets subtracted from our return. We do not really mind that this happens, because we find that we have already achieved the goal of bringing attention to our stance on military spending and war."

Rick and Carolyn have had a lien placed on their bank account for the amount owed plus interest and a small penalty. They have also had the IRS get the amount due by electronically taking their state tax refund. Ray and Wilma have been audited numerous times, likely due to the high amount of deductions they have for contributions.

The research on bystanders says that silence in the face of harm or wrongdoing emboldens harm-doers, leading them to assume others support and agree with them.—Rick and Carolyn Yoder

In summary, the words of Ben Cohen of Ben and Jerry's ice cream fame express our sentiments well: "We Americans need to measure our strength not in terms of how many people we can kill but in how many people we clothe, feed, house and care for." Somehow, that sounds a lot like a Rabbi from Nazareth, the one we serve, the one who said, "Follow me."

Carolyn Yoder is a member of Community Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Va.



1040 Department of the Treasury—Internal Revenue Service (99)
U.S. Individual Income Tax Return 2013 OMB No. 1545-0074 IRS Use Only—Do not write or staple in this space.

or the year Jan. 1–Dec. 31, 2013, or other tax year beginning , 2013, ending , 20 See separate instructions.

our first name and initial	Last name	Your social security number
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ome address (number and street). If you have a P.O. box, see instructions.	Apt. no.	▲ Make sure the SSN(s) above and on line 6c are correct.
ity, town or post office, state, and ZIP code. If you have a foreign address, also complete spaces below (see instructions).		Presidential Election Campaign Check here if you, or your spouse if filing jointly, want $3 to go to this fund. Checking a box below will not change your tax or
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2 ☐ Married filing jointly (even if only one had income)

But we didn't mean you

Two key rules for mission that come from Deuteronomy 31:8 and Matthew 28:18-20

by Barry C. Bartel

I studied the mission and values statements of Mennonite Mission Network carefully before agreeing to serve on its board. They sound good to me, even though "mission" has not always been a positive word for me.

Back in first or second grade, my parents took me to a concert on the Washington State University campus in Pullman. It was by a singer/songwriter member of the Sioux tribe named Floyd Red Crow Westerman. I don't remember a lot about the concert itself, but my parents bought the album, and that album captivated me. I remember lying on the living room floor listening to it. When the album played to the end, I got up and started it again. Over and over and over.

Floyd Red Crow Westerman sang with passion about how the white man had come to this sacred land and conquered the Native Americans. One of the songs was called "Missionaries." Here are some of the lyrics:

"Spread the word of your religions
Convert the whole world if you can
Kill and slaughter those who oppose you
Its worth it if you save one man
Go and tell the savage native
That he must be christianised
Tell him end his heathen worship
And you will make him civilized."

And after several stanzas of passionate critique, the last stanza instructs:

"Missionaries, missionaries
go and leave us all alone
Take your white god to your white men
We've a God of our own."

Westerman's signature song was entitled "Custer Died for Your Sins."

Fortunately, I also had good models of service and mission work growing up. We often had presentations at church by Mennonite Central Committee workers or mission workers on furlough. I had cousins who served with MCC in Brazil and Jordan and married women they met in their assignments. I owe a lot to my parents for the exposure they gave me to many different types of church service.

I was also fortunate to meet and marry a wonderful woman at college. We shared values and wanted to do Christian service after graduating. We applied to the mission boards and to MCC.

I still remember when we told my parents we had accepted a three-year assignment in Haiti. My mother said, Yes, we took you to programs about service and mission workers and helped develop a broad perspective of the world, and we support workers who go overseas, "but we didn't mean you."

I knew that she meant, We're proud of you, and this will be hard in some ways. But of course, we meant you. She said something similar when we later decided to go to Bolivia.

In our overseas experience, we saw many positive models of mission. In Bolivia, the Spanish-speaking Mennonite church had started when local people meeting with MCC workers in Bible studies in their homes said they wanted to start a church. Service work in the name of Christ led to the formation of new churches.

In my regional role in Bolivia, I also interacted with mission workers throughout South America and visited the Argentine Chaco. The mission board sent missionaries to work with the Toba indigenous group in the early 1940s. But the missionaries got more and more frustrated. The Mennonite missionaries were frustrated as they tried to start churches and learned that after people left the Spanish mission service, they held their own services in Toba. An evaluation team that came in 1954 had one main recommendation: The missionaries had to "get out of the way of what God is doing."

An evaluation team that came in 1954 had one main recommendation: The missionaries had to "get out of the way of what God is doing."

I can hear Floyd Westerman singing: "Missionaries, missionaries, go and leave us all alone. Take your white god to your white men; We've a God of our own."

But in 1954, the Mennonite mission did heed the recommendation, and they did try to get out of the way of what God was doing. Rather than try to plant new Mennonite churches, they changed their approach to walk alongside the local expressions of spirituality.

As my thinking about mission has evolved, I think I can boil mission down to two key rules:

First, make sure you recognize God in the other. This is what is missing when mission becomes conquest. Deuteronomy 31:8 instructs that, wherever we go, the Lord goes before us and goes with us. We forsake our God if we don't recognize God in all people. We should recognize God in the loving acts of others and recognize that

God does indeed go before us. That must affect how we think about mission.

Sometimes we talk about experiencing God in nature. That's easy. The hard part may be seeing God in other people.

The October 2013 issue of *The Mennonite* had a quote from Lillian Daniel that struck me: "Any idiot can find God alone in the sunset. It takes a certain maturity to find God in the person sitting next to you who … voted for the wrong political party."

It may not always be easy, but it seems to me that the first rule of mission has to be that we recognize God in the other.

We should recognize God in the loving acts of others and recognize that God does indeed go before us.

What I call the second key rule about mission is similar: **Make sure others can recognize God in you.** I gained a new insight about the Great Commission Scripture in preparing this message. It came through the worship resources on the Mission Network web page.

Sandy Miller provided this insight: "In Matthew 28:19, the Greek verb *poreuomai* (por-yoo'-om-ahee), or go, is a participle, not an imperative, and notes ongoing action. A better way to understand this Great Commission is to consider 'go' to mean 'as you go.' In other New Testament texts, this Greek verb is interpreted as how one should conduct oneself, or how one should live and walk in faith. The Great Commission is for the entire congregation."

I like that. It means that a key rule for mission is to make sure that others can recognize God in us.

Willis and Berdalene Horst demonstrated these two rules in their 38 years of service in the Chaco of Argentina. At the memorial service for Willis on Sept. 19, 2013, Lindy Shelly shared these words from Willis: "The indigenous people themselves taught us the profound value of intercultural theological dialogue. The format of the circle for the conversation with the biblical texts permits us to hear the voice of God from the indigenous perspective. In the Bible Circle, everyone teaches and everyone learns. Together with the indigenous people, the Mennonite team continues learning to be present without conquering—neither for the Christian denomination that sends us nor for the culture in which we were formed."

There are many ways to share the Good News—through preaching, through sharing, through serving "in the name of Christ." When we seek to proclaim the Good News in mission, it is key that we first recognize God in the other and that we make sure others recognize God in us.

I like the way Stanley Green puts it. He offered

these thoughts in his column in the November 2013 issue of *The Mennonite*, titled "From a 'crusading mind' to a 'crucified mind'": "The great new reality of our time is the shift from subject-object relations that have characterized missions in the last two centuries to a new era in which every church can embrace and live into its own identity as a subject of mission."

He goes on: "What we need is not a moratorium. Rather than indulge a withdrawal syndrome, based on our sense of guilt because of past failures, what we need in Western mission is a continuing conversion from what Koyama calls a 'crusading mind' to a 'crucified mind.'"

We need a commitment to participation in the global mission community in the spirit of servanthood, humility and relationships.

We like to describe it as Third Way Mission or, simply put, mission in the way of Jesus.

My understanding for and appreciation of mission has evolved. Willis Horst got it right. Linda Shelly shared these words of Willis at his memorial: "I went out to help others convert to Jesus and discovered that I was also converted in the process. … I realized that those to whom I had gone were already engaged in a spiritual journey long before western missionaries ever arrived on the scene."

And this last sentence sums it up the best: "God wants to save people by redeeming their own story, making it possible for [people] to keep their own identity."

I have often felt reluctant to respond to a request to serve the church, and I engage in some form of discernment process. When you hear that voice saying, "I can't do that," maybe you need to hear someone say, "Of course we meant you." I can hear God best when I am able to open myself to say, "Here I am, Lord."

A key rule for mission is to make sure that others can recognize God in us.

Barry C. Bartel is a member of Glennon Heights Mennonite Church, where he gave this sermon on Mission Sunday in November 2013.

Dual[ing] narratives on same-sex marriage

The Bible, experience and Christian charity allow for the exception of same-sex marriage.

by Martin Shupack

The debate today among the churches on same-sex marriage has focused on the meaning of the texts—what behavior exactly was Paul condemning—and whether or not this prohibition is a culture-specific or timeless command. There are many biblical instructions once viewed as universal and timeless that wisely have been revised because of profoundly changed historical contexts and fresh perspectives on God's dynamic work in the world. Women's role, subordination and slavery are the most cited, but there are many others.

Steve Snodgrass/creativecommons.org

Scholars have made sophisticated cases from Scripture on both sides of these questions. Their respective arguments provide Jesus' followers with two contrasting narratives for discerning God's will on same-sex marriage.

Narrative #1: Affirming only traditional marriage

The createdness of human beings as male and female and their physical and biological fit for sexual union with a view toward procreation is presented in Scripture as God's creational intent and foundational to human existence. This is the meaning of marriage for Scripture, in the wider religious world and in human history and culture generally.

This affirmation is not simply assumed as the normal cultural practice but is set forth as inherent in our created humanness at the beginning of Genesis, in Jesus' teaching, when he says, "At the beginning of creation God made them male and female, and for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife" (Mark 10:6-7), in Paul's reference to "nature" in Romans 1:26-7 and implicitly in every biblical discussion of marriage.

Redemption of creation in Jesus doesn't erase and replace the original creation but restores and perfects it.

If we are created physical beings, and if material creation is important to God, which all Scripture affirms, the physical and biological fit of male-female sexuality and its intrinsic connection to procreation cannot reasonably be denied. God ordained marriage between men and women, giving them complementary sexual organs, so that humankind could "be fruitful and multiply." Same-sex sexual intimacy is clearly different from what our bodies and our species are made and fitted for. Redemption of creation in Jesus doesn't erase and replace the original creation but restores and perfects it.

God promises grace and the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit to all who are called to celibacy, including those with a same-sex orientation. A compassionate church will relate to those with a same-sex orientation with understanding, patience and grace. It will not treat same-sex practice as more egregious than other behaviors that fall short of God's perfect will. But this does not change the truth of God's will or the ultimate goal of pastoral guidance and discipleship.

Narrative #2: Affirming marriage between couples of the same gender

God declared at creation that human beings are not made to be alone. Human beings need intimate social and physical companionship, and it is God's desire that we have this. For many people this need is met in a relationship with a member of the opposite sex. Yet a small percentage of people discover that this innate need for intimate companionship is fulfilled only through a relationship with someone of the same sex.

Many young people raised in the church respond to this discovery in themselves by praying for God to change their sexual orientation or, if not, to grant them the gift of celibacy. Often other church members accompany them in this prayer. A few find their prayers answered, but many—probably most—do not. Their need and longing for intimate companionship remains unchanged, no matter how rigorous their self-discipline.

This should not surprise us. Both Jesus and Paul recognize that not every believer has the gift of celibacy. And the evidence clearly indicates that many Christians with a same-sex orientation, like many who are heterosexually oriented, have not received this gift from God. What are they to do?

Mutual, self-giving love can and does occur in a marriage between two Christians of the same gender, reflecting the union of Christ and the church.

Paul writes that "it is better to marry than to burn with passion" (1 Corinthians 7:9). It is not God's will for believers to live in chronic frustration and distraction, which undermines mission, or in promiscuity, which destroys holiness.

In the New Testament, marriage and procreation are no longer foundational imperatives. According to Paul, marriage serves to satisfy sexual needs in a holy manner and provide the blessings of intimate companionship. Above all, marriage is, or should be, a reflection of the relationship of Christ and the church.

It is increasingly apparent that many Christians in covenanted same-sex unions manifest the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in their lives and ministries, just as Peter recognized the work of the Spirit in uncircumcised Cornelius. This witness is significant because the Holy Spirit's presence suggests a life in faithful relationship with God and because the Holy Spirit often runs ahead of the churches' formal decision-making. First came the Holy Spirit baptism of Cornelius and the irruption of the Gentile churches, followed by the Jerusalem Council's process of discernment and authoritative decision.

Above all, it is clear that mutual, self-giving love can and does occur in a marriage between two Christians of the same gender, reflecting the union of Christ and the church. That is, a couple of the same sex can meet the "sacramental" requirements of marriage, illuminating Christ's presence and serving as a means of grace to the world. No less than heterosexual marriage, such unions can be exclusive, permanent and issue in shared lives of service to God.

Must we decide between these two biblically based narratives?

Surely it is more biblically faithful to seek to reconcile and apply the entire range of relevant biblical material—and the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the experience of the churches—to today's context. While heterosexual marriages are the foundational biblical template and most accord with creational parameters, may we not recognize an exception for covenanted, monogamous same-sex unions/marriage, where a settled same-sex orientation exists and the gift of celibacy is lacking?

For biblical parallels to such an exception, we might think of God's act of compassion in Numbers 9:1-8, permitting those who are ceremonially unclean at the prescribed time for the solemn Passover to celebrate it one month later. Ordinarily the penalty for such a violation was to be "cut off from Israel." And in 1 Samuel 21, David's men are allowed to eat the consecrated bread, an unlawful act granted as an exception. Jesus later points favorably to this act, in defending his own disciples, who, contrary to a strict interpretation of the Law, pick grain heads on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-8).

Perhaps the closest parallels are Jesus' (Matthew 19:9) and Paul's (1 Corinthians 7:15) exceptions to the prohibition of remarriage after divorce, as Protestant Christians understand them. For Christians, such remarriage is generally prohibited, and it was completely banned as contrary to Scripture for 1,500 years. But since the 16th century, Protestant churches—including Mennonites—have affirmed specific exceptions. Might monogamous, lifelong, covenanted unions or marriage between a couple of the same gender constitute a similar exception to the general prohibition against homosexual practice?

Such an exception is especially compelling, given that our historical and cultural context today is very different from that of the society in which Paul's instructions were given.

Whether or not Paul's condemnation of same-sex relations is best understood as specific to the depraved sexual practices that characterized the ancient world, this was clearly the predominant social-sexual context in which Paul wrote. Today, the broad social context is very different. Mutual, loving, long-term unions—not of jaded heterosexuals but of ordinary men and women who are constitutionally homosexual—are common.

Affirming this exception would account for all the relevant underlying biblical affirmations and values. It acknowledges the created biological fit of heterosexual unions while also recognizing the sacramental capacity and witness of the Holy Spirit in the lives of many brothers and sisters in same-sex covenanted/married unions. And finally, it is to follow the classical Christian practice of making moral judgments with a predisposition toward charity.

Augustine, Calvin and some Anabaptists emphasized that all Scripture must be interpreted in light of Christian love. According to Augustine, "We must meditate on what we read [in Scripture] until an interpretation be found that tends to establish the reign of charity." And, "Whoever finds a lesson [in Scripture] useful to the building of charity, even though he has not said what the author may be shown to have intended in that place, has not been deceived" (*Augustine: On Christian Doctrine* by D.W. Robertson).

Calvin, who emphasized biblical authority, argued for discerning the proper application of Scripture's moral instructions according to the "rule of charity." "Everything," he wrote, "should be examined in the light of Christ's precept: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. This precept is applicable every time" (*Calvin's Ecclesiastical Advice*, translated by Beaty and Farley). (In discussing when one may and may not lend money at interest, in view of the strong Scriptural injunctions against it, Calvin gives this principle of "charity" for determining the morality of any particular applied practice in view of biblical teaching.)

And the Anabaptist leader Blesdijk, opposing what he believed to be some Anabaptists' overly rigid biblical literalism, argued that the words of Scripture must be understood according to what he called the foundation of all Scripture—"faith acting through love" (*Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* by C. Arnold Snyder).

Recognizing this exception does not mean simply tolerating couples in same-sex unions as second-class church members. Rather it involves the judgment that God sanctifies this exception and accords these believers equal status in the Christian community, including access to licensed and ordained ministry.

Ultimately it falls to the churches—whether at the denominational, conference or congregational level—to discern and decide what the Holy Spirit is saying today about marriage between couples of the same gender. The term Jesus used for making such judgments is "binding and loosing." John Howard Yoder identified binding and loosing as a vital church practice of moral discernment and reconciliation that "deserves to be considered one of the sacramental works of the community" (*Body Politics*).

This requires careful reflection together on Scripture as God's written Word. But it is not confined to the texts, as if the matter could be resolved by scholars alone. As with the question of Gentile admission, the testimonies of God's dynamic work in the world—like those of Paul and Barnabas—and accounts of the acts of the Holy Spirit—like Peter's experience with Cornelius—are likewise important. Infusing everything must be an unwavering commitment to know and do God's will.

Recognizing this exception does not mean simply tolerating couples in same-sex unions as second-class church members.

Scholarly exegesis is not an exact science, and history is not fully knowable. Ultimately, the churches will have to reach a judgment, in spite of conflicted scholarship, on the basis of their best reading of the totality of Jesus and Scripture, the best available historical knowledge and the living testimony of the Holy Spirit, who Jesus promises will "lead us into all truth" (John 16:13).

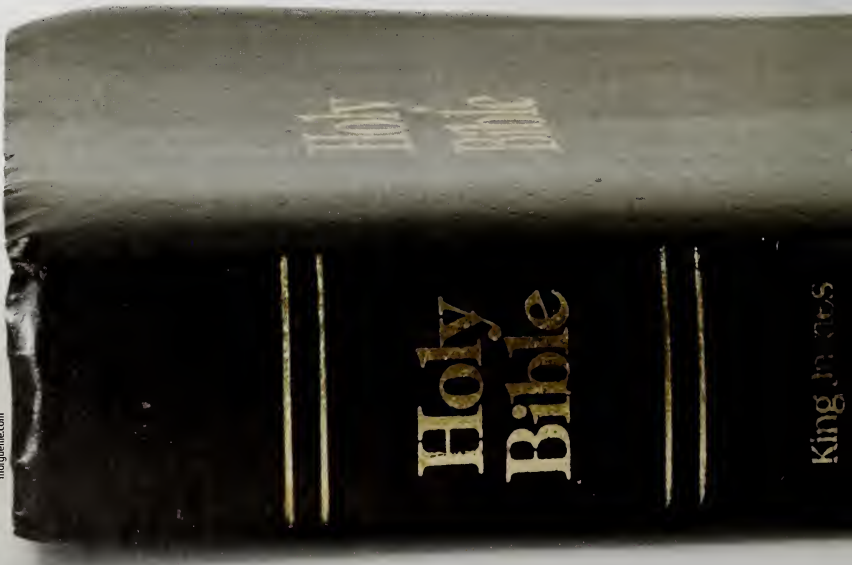
Martin Shupack is director of advocacy for Church World Service and attends a Mennonite church in Alexandria, Va.

The narrative of the one Jesus

Jesus is both compassionate evangelist and commanding Lord.

by Mark Thiessen Nation

As I was in the midst of writing this essay, I was also preparing a sermon on John 4:1-42, the story about the Samaritan woman at the well and Jesus. A well-known story, it is one of many in the Gospels that display, narratively, what it means to "love your neighbor as yourself." We are provided a vivid portrait by Jesus of what welcome and compassion look like. Attentive readers are reminded that those who seek to be followers of Jesus must, like our Lord, embody this unusual, engaged and honest love.



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Just after presenting my sermon, I remembered that a dear friend of mine is in some ways similar to the Samaritan woman in John 4. About eight years ago, my friend sat at a kitchen table and wept. His life was out of control. He had been married five times and was living with a woman who was not his wife. He had multiple addictions, he said; his “gateway” addiction was sex.

Ever since that day, I have known two things. First, his full story clarified for me that sexuality is never a discreet issue. Second, he needed me to be as Jesus was to the Samaritan woman—someone who listened and elicited his own honesty about who he was. In the midst of my ongoing relationship with him, I have tried, when possible, to help him encounter the transforming power of Jesus—so he could know Jesus and the “spring of water gushing up to deep, lasting life,” in the way she did. (For that I still await.)

As I was finishing the preparation for my sermon on the woman at the well, I realized that most everyone I know likes what might be called the “evangelist Jesus,” the one in this passage who is welcoming and loving. However, I wonder how many of us today like the “commanding Jesus”?

What we read in John 4 is only the beginning of that story. If this woman—and the others from her city—truly became followers of Jesus, then they, like all other followers of Jesus, would hear him say words like the ones he uttered later in John’s Gospel. “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (14:15).

Our covenants of sexual faithfulness (to God and others) are fragile according to the New Testament.

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Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his extraordinary book *Discipleship*, has helped many of us more fully grasp the wonders of grace and how it is costly and therefore inherently entails a costly discipleship. From what he says about the vital importance of sexual fidelity, it appears Bonhoeffer agrees with me in affirming what I have sometimes described in the following way:

A traditional Christian view of marriage: God created human beings as male and female—not wanting either gender to be alone—and made them both in the image of God. As the images of God, the Lord commissioned them to be stewards of the earth. They were created as sexual beings and are not to be ashamed of that. A man and a woman leave their parents' households in order to join together as husband and wife and become one flesh in a covenant for life. As husband and wife, God blesses them and tells them to "be fruitful and multiply."

Our approach to subjects like sexuality is, mimicking our larger culture, mired in an almost unquestionable affirmation of a libertarian individualism.

The New Testament clarifies that the central purpose for all of us who are in a covenant relationship with God is to witness to the God revealed in Jesus Christ. This leads to three sometimes offensive conclusions. First, though family is important, we should not idolize the family. Second, a corollary of the first: whether situated within families or not, our lives are to be given to praise of God, which necessarily includes compassionate service and hospitality in his name. Third, we should also honor a life of celibate singleness as a worthy way to serve God.

Our covenants of sexual faithfulness (to God and others) are fragile according to the New Testament. Many passages strongly emphasize various sexual temptations often simply subsumed under general warnings against sexual immorality. In the midst of these warnings, Jesus and the New Testament as a whole reaffirms that the vitality of marriage bonds depends on the sexual differentiation of male and female.

The New Testament does not view sexual intercourse as essential for a healthy fulfilled life—sex is less important than we make it today. On the other hand, these passages make sex more important than the view of "casual sex" often does. Instead, sexual intercourse is a powerful gift intended to bond the married couple—a gift effective enough that when it is divorced from this union it becomes the sins of lust and sexual immorality. Without sex being connected to the past (parents), the future (through the possibility of children) and the Christian community that lives in light of the vision of the coming reign of God, sex can easily lose its moorings and purpose (and thus resist appropriate constraints).

There have been dissenters from this normative position (as there are from any normative Christian teaching). And as is implied by my summary, almost all of us have struggles at one time or another. But having struggles, being honest about temptations or even moral failings is qualitatively different from redefining or effectively dismissing the call to the specifics of sexual faithfulness. Or what seems common today: pronouncing as oppressive any notion of faithfulness that doesn't fit neatly into a squishy understanding of love and inclusiveness. Such pronouncements gain traction largely because—despite mostly empty rhetoric about community—our approach to subjects like sexuality is, mimicking our larger culture, mired in an almost unquestionable affirmation of a libertarian individualism. (Listen, for instance, to the rhetoric that emanates from LGBT activist groups—when not doing PR to be acceptable to "more traditional" constituents.)

Marty Shupack and I are long-time friends. He used to be my pastor; he was a board member of my Christian peace and justice organization in central Illinois for the six years I directed it. As it happens, it was with him in an ecumenical study group that I first started seriously studying the same-sex issue in, if memory serves, 1983. At that time, among other things, I read books by John Boswell and Robin Scroggs on the same-sex issue. I remember that Scroggs said that Paul, when he discussed same-sex relationships, was not talking about the same thing we are. Paul only knew about pederasty: unequal and abusive man/boy relationships.

Ever since this book, the claim that the Bible is not talking about what we are talking about has become a mantra among those who want to marginalize the 2,000-year-old consensus Christian view rooted in apparently clear biblical teachings. The claim is that our knowledge of homosexuality and homosexual relationships has changed. In some ways that's true. Our understanding of many things has changed. However, in this case not in the dramatic ways imagined.

From considerable reading over the last 30 years, I now know, e.g., that, according to lesbian scholar Bernadette Brooten, the ancient Greco-Roman world at the time of Paul had its own concepts of orientation; according to primary source material collected from his time, Paul's world knew of long-term committed, equal gay and lesbian relationships as well as unequal abusive ones; and in the midst of this, according to William Loader's massive study, there was a consensus among ancient Jewish teachings that all same-sex sexual relationships were wrong.

(I should also mention that the most obvious reason that Jesus never mentioned same-sex relationships would have been because he agreed with the Jewish consensus. Paul, on the other hand was much more fully engaged with the Gentile world, so it was an issue for some of the churches he addressed in a way it was not for Jesus' mostly Jewish world.)

What has changed dramatically, however, is not our understanding of homosexuality but a sexual revolution, beginning with my generation, joined to an ever deepening form of radical individualism and a weakening of the church's influence in society at large (along with the Mennonite church's greater engagement with popular culture).

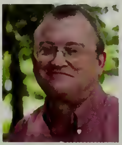
For approximately six years I tilted in an affirming direction (influenced by writers like Scroggs and Boswell). Then I read more. I read not only more in biblical studies and theology but more facts (in light of my lifetime of relationships with various gay and bisexual boys and men, as well as more limited relationships with lesbians).

I repeatedly noticed the apparent disinterest in facts on the part of many well-meaning people (read chapters four and five of *Unprotected* by UCLA psychiatrist Miriam Gross for a sample of what I mean). Facts, it seemed to me, confirmed the traditional view regarding heterosexual marriage. And I typically observed an apparent slim range of reading in terms of theology and biblical studies.

I totally agree with Marty that Augustine, Calvin and Anabaptists such as Menno Simons all agreed that we must interpret Scripture "in light of Christian love." They—and the early church fathers before them—are following Paul, who says in Colossians, "As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience" (3:12). Earlier in the same chapter, though, he says, "Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry)" (3:5). The whole passage is instructive (along with Ephesians 2-5). But the problem for Marty is that Paul, Augustine, Calvin and Menno agree with me, not him, on same-sex relations. The only reason a reader of his essay can't imagine true love would be joined to a prohibition against sexual immorality (including same-sex relations) is because "love" functions in our present culture the way Karl Barth said "grace" was functioning for Dietrich Bonhoeffer in mid-1931 (six years before he wrote *Discipleship*); it was being made "into a principle and bludgeoning everything else to death."

I wish I could devote almost 100 percent of my time on this issue to helping us discern how we can, in real ways, know what it means to be loving and supportive of real gays and lesbians.

Let me end with this. At a prominent place in every presentation I now give on this subject, I say something like the following: I wish I could devote almost 100 percent of my time on this issue to helping us discern how we can, in real ways, know what it means to be loving and supportive of real gays and lesbians—with names, faces and particular lives—who are among us (after having affirmed the traditional view of marriage). That is to say, I want us to live with the question of how we embody what it means to be true followers of Jesus, the compassionate evangelist and commanding Lord.



Mark Thiessen Nation is professor of theology at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va., and is on the elder team of The Early Church, a Virginia Conference congregation in Harrisonburg.

Where saying yes can take you

Hannah Heinzekehr is director of communication for Executive Board staff of Mennonite Church USA.

As we approach age 30, Justin, my husband, and I have talked about our goals, especially as they relate to our sense of career and calling. For Justin there's a clear trajectory he can visualize and would like to see materialize. We know that even the best-laid plans sometimes fail, but Justin at least has a clear sense of where he'd like to be and what he'd like to be doing in 10 more years.

For me, the answer to this question has proved more elusive. It's not that there aren't things that I'm passionate about or that there isn't lots of work out there I could get excited about. On the contrary, I can get excited about almost any opportunity put in front of me if I pause to consider it long enough and it involves working with people (I'm an extrovert).

Over the last eight years since I graduated from college, I can see that the places and spaces I've engaged with my work have been less about intentionally moving toward one set career and more about saying yes to good opportunities when they've presented themselves.

Before she left her role as president at Bluffton (Ohio) University, Lee Snyder sent me an email with this poem by Sheri Hostetler (a poem she also quotes in her recent memoir), and she sent it to me as an encouragement to do just what I've been talking about: to say yes to opportunities when they present themselves.

Say yes quickly before you think too hard
or the soles of your feet give out.
Say yes before you see the to-do list.
Saying maybe will only get you to the door,
but never past it.
Say yes before the dove departs for, yes,
she will depart and you will be left
alone with your yes,
your affirmation of what you
couldn't possibly know was coming.
Keep saying yes.
You might as well.
You're here in this wide space now,
no walls and certainly not a roof.
The door is always an illusion.

There's no one right way to seek a vocation; what's most important is to be open to God's call and to say yes when we feel her Spirit urging us to act or be present somewhere.

There's no one right way to seek a vocation; what's most important is to be open to God's call.

One of the greatest gifts of these varied roles I've assumed across Mennonite Church USA over the past eight years has been encountering people across the country who have embodied the words of this poem and who enact their "yes" in response to God's call.

I think of Jeff and Cheryl Landis, who spent years giving leadership to Pine Lake Fellowship Camp in Meridian, Miss., a holy place of retreat for many members of Gulf States Mennonite Conference. I think of the Williams family in Tampa, Fla., who have devoted their lives to leadership development and faith formation for young adults. I think of the members of Maranatha Christian Fellowship, a multicultural congregation in Northridge, Calif., who have learned to celebrate their Indonesian roots but also to embrace new worship styles and ways of being together so that their young adults feel at home in church. I think of Hyun and Sue Hur, who live out Jesus' call to be peacemakers throughout the Korean and Mennonite communities in Los Angeles County. I think about conference minister Herm Weaver preaching one of the most powerful sermons I've ever heard three years ago, reminding those gathered that God is always faithful. I think of Rachel Halder, who has bravely shouted from the rooftops our need to acknowledge the ways sexualized violence is made invisible in our church. And I think about Doug and Cindy Baker and Lois and John Mast, four individuals who have devoted countless hours and energy to nurturing junior high and high school students at the congregation where I grew up, Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen, Ind.

My work has given me hope. There are so many good people across Mennonite Church USA, striving to be faithful to God's call in their local contexts. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." This does not mean the journey will always be easy or clear. It doesn't mean there's only one good choice we can make. But it does mean God wants us to join in the work unfolding in the world. I may not know where my next step will lead or where my career may take me over the next 10 years, but I can be ready to say yes when the Spirit nudges me. TM

Bread or recipe?

John 6 tells the story of Jesus feeding people with bread and calling himself the Bread of Life. As a large crowd gathers around Jesus because of the healings they have seen, Jesus asks his disciples where they can buy bread to feed the people. Philip, overwhelmed by this question, realizes there is no place to go to buy so much bread. What they find within the crowd is one boy's lunch, and Jesus is able to feed the multitude with it, with some left over.

In Mennonite Church USA, we gather around Jesus, hungry for nourishment. How will we be able to satiate our appetites when there seems to be not enough grace, not enough holiness, not enough healing, not enough bread to go around? It's overwhelming to meet so many differing needs at once, so we divide ourselves into smaller groups based on doctrine, ethnicity, social standing, financial resources, our degree of attachment to tradition and common ministry goals, which can skew our understanding of the bigger picture.

We're not all in the same place in our journey with God.

Unlike Philip, who recognized that the problem of caring for the multitude was too overwhelming to be solved, we try desperately to find the right ingredients for bread. We gather our intelligence, our logic, our knowledge, our beliefs and our favorite way to interpret Scripture to try to meet differing needs ourselves, resulting in numerous, conflicting recipes, as we wrestle with these questions: What kind of church do we want? Who is in and who is out? What do we believe? What is our mission? What are our responsibilities to one another? How do we determine what sin looks like today? What should be our response to sin? Who is in charge here? No matter how often we revise our *Confession of Faith from a Mennonite Perspective*, our hymnbooks and our polities, before long they need revision. Yet we keep trying to find a formula, a recipe that works.

Let's face it. It's hopeless. We'll never get it right.

Jesus didn't ask us to create the recipe or make the bread. He reminds us that we are not in charge of the church or anyone else. He is in charge, so why are we arguing about what he wants? He has not given our leaders a limited supply of bread to disseminate to those who deserve it. The bread we receive from the church may be good, but it's always a day or more old and a little stale. Jesus gives bread (himself) to each person each day—just what we need for that day or that meal. He wants us to learn from him, directly, and incrementally. His bread won't taste the same to everyone, and it won't taste the same at different times in our lives.

We can learn from one another's wisdom and journeys, but we need to recognize that we're all a bit skewed in our understanding. We don't all start our journey with God in the same place, and we're not all in the same place in our journey with God. Jesus gives himself to each of us and gives us what we need to live abundant, eternal lives. Since each of us is unique, we won't all have the same perspective, ever, unless we reduce faith to whatever recipe we think we understand in our heads and can convince others is truth.

God intends much more for us. We don't have to create a recipe. We don't have to follow a recipe. He gives us the real bread, Jesus. All we have to do, once we have a relationship with Jesus, is to listen to him in order to understand what we need for the day and to run to him when we realize we're being tempted. He will transform us from the inside out in his own time so that we will desire something better for ourselves. This is good news. Creating, handing out and following recipes is a *lot* of work and distracts us from our responsibility to share the good news that Jesus is the Bread.

If we are truly submitted to God, we won't need to argue to prove we are right and others are wrong. We can trust God; we can have faith in God's love for each person and in God's ability to transform hearts in God's own way, which might be different from how we would choose to do it. Transformation of others is neither our responsibility nor our right. We don't have to make a recipe for bread and knead it with our own hands. We'd only mess it up. Jesus himself is a limitless supply of bread and the only bread we will ever need. Let's give him room to work.

Diane I. Bleam is a member of Bally (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Directors transition at The Corinthian Plan

Church benefits plan continues to be stable in its fourth year.

Keith Harder of Hillsboro, Kan., retired March 31 from his position as director of The Corinthian Plan (TCP), a Mennonite Church USA-sponsored health coverage and benefits program based on mutual care practices.

Duncan Smith of Beaverton, Ore., who has been an area representative for the plan for the West Coast since 2010, began March 15 as interim director for a one-year term.

Harder led a project team in developing TCP in response to a resolution passed by the denomination's Delegate Assembly in 2007 that called for the Executive Board to develop a plan that would provide all pastors with basic health coverage.

Duncan Smith

Inspired by 2 Corinthians 8:14, in which Paul urges the church to share its resources, it was launched in January 2010.

The self-funded plan provides benefits for pastors and staff members in 401 congregations within Mennonite Church USA and for employees of some area conferences and church agencies. It represents about 70 percent of Mennonite Church USA congregations with eligible employees.

Since the plan's inception, participating congregations have contributed more than $2 million to the plan's mutual care component—the Fair Balance Fund—which helps smaller congregations participate in the plan. Currently 51 congregations are receiving subsides totaling just under $450,000 per year.

Harder's background as a pastor and denominational minister helped equip him for the unique task he faced in 2007. He began working with the General Conference (GC) Mennonite Church in the Office of Ministerial Leadership in 1999.

When the GC merged with the Mennonite Church to form Mennonite Church USA in 2002, he became co-director of the new ministerial leadership team. One of his responsibilities was overseeing the Covenant Mutual Benefits (COMB) Plan—the health-coverage plan offered to congregations and area conference staff at the time.

According to Harder, participation in the COMB plan was limited, partly because area conferences needed to have a specific percentage of congregations participating to qualify for the plan.

This meant that some pastors were not able to participate and were uninsured.

The mutual aid component of the redesigned plan helped address this issue, he says, adding, "We also made other changes to make it a better product than what we were able to offer before."

"Working with the plan has been gratifying, especially in knowing that we're providing coverage for people who might not otherwise have any," Harder says. "I describ that as a small step toward being a more just church."

Everence—the denomination's stewardship agency—administers TCP, and claims are paid by Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Though he is retiring, Harder will continue to serve TCP as an area representative for Western District, South Central and Central Plains Mennonite conferences.

Smith will continue in his area representative role—serving Pacific Northwest, Pacific Southwest and Mountain States Mennonite conferences—in addition to the role of director.

"One of the reasons I wanted to serve as an area representative was to work with congregations on the margins—immigrant and lower-income congregations—especially in gaining access to health care," Smith says.

Smith has served as a pastor, conference minister and interim pastor, working in both rural and urban settings. He also works in church consulting and mediation and has chaired the Leadership Discernment Committee for Mennonite Church USA. —*Annette Brill Bergstresser of Mennonite Church USA*

Corinthian Plan renewals strong for 2014

According to Keith Harder, outgoing director, and Duncan Smith, incoming director, the plan continues to be in a stable, financially strong position.

Twenty congregations did not renew their coverage for 2014, and of those, about half a dozen opted to purchase coverage through an Affordable Care Act exchange plan. That amount was not enough to cause concern, Harder says.

While the number of 400 participating congregations has proven to be a sustainable level, the number of congregations is not as important as the risk profiles of the members, Harder says. He notes that there will still be people without access to coverage due to their income level and because some states are choosing not to expand Medicaid coverage. In The Corinthian Plan, eligibility is based on hours of paid work/ministry, not on income.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Hilary Scarsella leaves Women in Leadership Project

Project hopes to build on her contributions

Hilary J. Scarsella, co-coordinator of Mennonite Church USA's Women in Leadership Project (WLP), ended her service as an Executive Board staff member April 30. She has accepted an opportunity to continue her academic work in a Ph.D. program at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn., which led to her leaving the position earlier than originally expected. Due to budget constraints, Scarsella's quarter-time position was set to end July 31.

Scarsella co-led the WLP for two years with Joanna Shenk, who has been leading the project since its inception in 2009-10 and will continue to coordinate it. Scarsella's responsibilities included coordinating four focus groups (Undoing Sexism, Mennonite Monologues, Empowering Resources and Mentoring), editing the *Do You See This Woman?* worship resources and being the primary planner of "All You Need is Love," the Women Doing Theology Conference held Feb. 20–22 in Leesburg, Va. (See our April issue, page 32.)

Hilary J. Scarsella

"I've really enjoyed working alongside Hilary and am grateful for her significant contributions; they continue to enliven the WLP," says Shenk. "Her work in organizing the Women Doing Theology Conference created a lot of momentum that continues to benefit our ongoing work."

"It's been a joy and privilege to work alongside Joanna and many women and men across the country who are excited about strengthening equitable structures and relationships in the church," Scarsella says. "While this is the sort of work that encounters resistance, it is also work that allowed me to catch more than a few glimpses of how beautiful our church is when we love and care for each other well. I hope the WLP will find the support and funding needed for its work to continue in meaningful and creative ways."

Scarsella says she will continue to stay connected with the WLP as her schedule allows, editing a book of papers and other materials from "All You Need Is Love."

Due to budget uncertainties and continued discussion about how best to continue the work of the project, no final decision has been made about hiring a new co-coordinator to work with Shenk. According to Shenk, she and the steering committee of the WLP are continuing to build on the success of "All You Need is Love" as well as other existing initiatives and are looking to involve more women and men.

They invite prayers as they seek ways to fund and continue the work.—*Mennonite Church USA*

The Mennonite, Inc., anticipates new website in fall

Board encourages increasing online content, broadening audience

At the annual meeting of board and staff April 26 in Elkhart, Ind., members discussed ways to broaden the audience and increase online content of The Mennonite, Inc.

Interim editor Anna Groff presented plans for a new website, to be launched in September. "The website will provide a place for daily news updates, as well as articles and blogs from a broader variety of Mennonite voices and sources," reported Groff. "There will also be more separation between the new site and the print magazine."

"We're pleased with the web traffic and engagement on our current site," she said. "We believe they will only increase with the new site's updated functionality and social media features."

Board chair Barth Hague noted that The Mennonite, Inc., "continues to search for new ways to distribute content that serve our mission to Mennonite Church USA and its congregations while creating a viable business model for our small organization." Further, he said, "We believe the web and digital media are the foundation for how Mennonite Church USA members will gather information and communicate in the future."

Groff reported that the magazine plans to use a new online subscription-fulfillment service in the coming year. This should enhance efficiency and provide better access to online subscription management, she said.

The board approved a 2014-15 budget of $404,000, about 9 percent below the previous year's budget. While income is projected to cover expenses, subscriptions to the print magazine continue to decline.—*Gordon Houser*

Burgos Mennonite's song chosen for remembrance

Church member in Spain key in ceremony remembering bombing

Chema García Soria

Nohemy García Soria sings an original song on March 11 as a commemoration of the 10-year anniversary of the Madrid train bombings. She is a member of Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Burgos (Burgos Evangelical Mennonite Church).

Ten years after the train bombings in Madrid, 50 choirs sang "Despertar (Awakening)," a song with a commitment to work for national peace.

It was especially meaningful for Mennonite Mission Network's Connie Byler and Soli Deo, a gospel choir associated with the Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Burgos (Burgos Evangelical Mennonite Church), because their choir director, Nohemy García Soria, wrote and composed the song.

"On the cold, dark night when we sang on the main plaza, I think we all just felt happy to bless our city in a new way and join the many groups around the country at the same time," says Byler, who serves in Spain with her husband, Dennis Byler.

Soli Deo has about 25 members who mostly come from Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Burgos. Some members heard the choir on the street and asked to join. García Soria has directed the choir for about five years. She grew up in the Burgos Mennonite Church and still attends the church.

A few months earlier, the Pacto de Convivencia (Coexistence Pact), an organization formed to remember the victims of the Madrid bombing and promote peace in Spain, asked García Soria to participate in a nationwide contest to write a song for the 10th anniversary of the bombings.

The bombs planted in the train killed 191 people and injured 1,800. Islamist extremists carried out the attack because of Spain's participation in the war in Iraq.

At the time of the bombing, García Soria lived in Germany. She had started to write a song back then, but never finished it.

"So when [the organization] asked me, I thought to myself that there was no coincidence in God's plans," she says.

A month later, the group called her and told her they had chosen her song.

"They loved the song," says García Soria. "They said it was the perfect way to call Spain, to gather them together and to sing an anthem of peace for the country and for all nations suffering terrorism."

García Soria prepared all the choir parts, instrumental parts and recorded the song. The materials were placed on the Pacto de Convivencia website so that other choirs and groups could join in and sing their support for peace in Spain.

The song's lyrics call for a new awakening to a peaceful future in Spain.

"I like the song because it is pure gospel without being religious," says Byler. "We could sing it in our churches, because we all need healing, peace and a new awakening."

The Pacto de Convivencia called this 10th anniversary celebration "En la clave de paz" ("In the key of peace").

"Choirs from all over the country joined the project and literally thousands of people gathered in hundreds of cities that week, singing together: an awakening, for Spain," says García Soria.

Aside from the groups in Spain who sang, groups from Australia, the United Kingdom, Mexico and Japan joined the initiative and showed their support. García Soria says even TV channels in Argentina reported and played the song.

"God showed me a way to be a blessing through music: a universal language that everybody understands and receives in better ways than just words," says García Soria, who says that music is a big part of her life. She participates in music projects constantly.

"I felt proud and happy for Nohemy, because she was so much a part of our family as she grew up with our girls," says Byler. "The piano in our home inspired her to learn to play the instrument, and I never thought she'd get so far."

As a result of this project, García Soria hopes to continue to write songs.

"This little adventure has given me the courage and the motivation to keep writing songs for God's kingdom," says García Soria. "I know that God has a plan for me, and worship is definitely something that God has called me to do. It's about finding the heart of a worshiper that God put in me."

See the music and choral parts at http://www.cervantesenmanhattan.org/pactodeconvivencia/en-clave-de-paz/canciones-de-paz-para-un-pacto-por-la-convivencia/.

Listen to García Soria and Soli Deo perform the song in Burgos at http://youtube/jLAylbeoYM0.—*Sara Alvarez of Mennonite Mission Network*

Correction: Lynda Hollinger-Janzen, not Sara Alvarez, wrote "Dreams Guide Ministry of Setting Captives Free" in the May issue, page 34.

Florida students embrace global education

Sarasota Christian School encourages students to develop global awareness.

No more water bottles in class, Bible teacher Don Fry tells the group of 10th graders as they come into his classroom at Sarasota (Fla.) Christian School. Usually congenial, this time Fry speaks in the no-nonsense voice teachers use when they know students are likely to object.

Looking confused, students pull water bottles from their backpacks and put them on the table.

School administrators, Fry says, have decided that water bottles are too disruptive. From now on, students can use the water fountain in the gym between classes and drink at lunch.

But the gym isn't always open, students object, and it's out of the way.

Anticipating their reaction, Fry pulls three water bottles from under his desk that he says they can drink when they are thirsty.

One of them holds brown river water. Another looks clear, but he says it has 50 times the amount of arsenic that is acceptable in drinking water. The third has clean water.

The students realize they have been duped.

"You were mad at me because you believe it is a human right to have water," Fry tells students as they reclaim their water bottles. Yet, he says, in Bangladesh, some people only have access to river water or water with arsenic. In the lesson that follows, the class explores the problem and discusses possible solutions, including education.

Fry's lesson is one of many at Sarasota Christian School this year that are designed to stretch the global awareness of its 425 students in kindergarten through grade 12.

To focus the teaching, school administrators have been working with Mennonite Central Committee's Global Family education program. Each grade is connected to a school in another country that Global Family helps support.

The Sarasota students not only learn about the school, the children, the culture and the country, they also raise $3,900 each year to support 13 schools on four continents. Schools use the funds in various ways, from student tuition and teacher education to extracurricular programs and food.

"We want our students to graduate with a global perspective," says Jeffrey Shank, superintendent. "Part of loving our neighbors means that we understand them, get to know them and engage in conversation with them and really work at just helping our students understand people from around the world."

Understanding can be as simple as kindergartners praying for the Zimbabwean children they see on their teacher's electronic tablet or second graders drawing their own design like those seen on kangas, a traditional women's dress in Kenya. Fifth graders read Palestinian folk tales and turned one into a play they performed for the other students in a Global Family chapel.

Seniors in Spanish class who are connecting with a school in Palestine were introduced to Arabic. Juniors worked with Spanish because their school is in Nicaragua and sophomores learned some Bengali.

Each subject on every grade level incorporates lessons related to the country their students are studying, which requires some creativity for some subjects.

Ratio tables was the answer for sixth-grade math teacher Arika Chupp, who taught students how to use the tables to compare U.S. dollars to Burundi francs. In science class, groups analyzed the environmental impact of deforestation in that African country.

Learning about other countries and the schools leads to a desire for personal connection. Third graders made a video to send to the school they sponsor in Cambodia. Students in Ovalle's Spanish III class are going on a learning tour to Nicaragua in the fall.

Gradually, teachers are figuring out how to fit the global perspective into their existing curriculum and understanding how the program ties into the school's values of community, service and peacebuilding, says Dawn Graber, director of academics, who was instrumental in starting the Global Family program at the school.

Watch Sarasota Christian School connect with Global Family program and partners in the video, "Learning and giving," at mcc.org/stories/videos/learning-and-giving.
—Linda Espenshade and Miriam Copp-Johnson for MCC

MCC photo by Silas Crews

Karla Mumaw, Sarasota Christian middle school math and Spanish teacher, hands out worksheets about Colombia to her students.

Colleges, seminary graduate 1,148 students

Speakers include mayor, moderator, Nobel Laureate and others.

Bluffton (Ohio) University
260 graduates, May 4

For many college students, graduation means that life in the "real world" is beginning and "studying is over," the mayor of Lima said May 4 at Bluffton University's commencement.

"I understand this perspective because I lived it," added David Berger, noting that he skipped two graduation ceremonies—at the undergraduate and graduate levels—because they weren't important and he didn't have time for them. "I was done studying," he recalled.

But the seven-term Lima mayor also offered a different perspective to the roughly 260 graduates he addressed at Bluffton's 114th annual commencement, saying the event marked "the beginning of your education, not the end of it."

Berger called the ceremony "the start of a learning process that you are personally in charge of; that you get to design, direct and make choices about; and that does not involve going into debt to make happen and to sustain."

The mayor made four recommendations to the graduates, including that they read at least one newspaper every day—"staying connected and knowledgeable about current events in the community you are a part of is important to how you will live your life," he said; get and use a library card and discuss what they discover in their "self-directed learning" with family and friends.

He also urged them to think long term. He is a member of the San Francisco-based Long Now Foundation, whose purpose, he explained, is "to challenge us to think about human civilization as far into the future as human civilization has already existed—10,000 years."

Bluffton University photo

Lima (Ohio) Mayor David J. Berger addresses Bluffton University graduates May 4.

Also at commencement, the university:

- Granted a posthumous bachelor's degree in organizational management to Cecilia Rittenhouse of Bryan, Ohio. Her son, Joseph, accepted the diploma on behalf of his mother, who died at age 71 on March 24, several weeks before she would have completed her academic program.
- Granted emeritus status to Gregg Luginbuhl, professor of art, who is retiring after 30 years at Bluffton and 38 years of college teaching overall.—*Bluffton University*

Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va., 17 graduates, April 26

"This is a beginning disguised as an ending," Jon Swartz tol his classmates at Eastern Mennonite Seminary's baccalaureate worship service. Swartz and 16 others received degrees and certificates on April 26.

These graduates have big plans for ministry. Some expec to be pastors in the United Methodist Church. Some expect to be chaplains or work in pastoral counseling settings. Some are planning for church planting or ministry combined with work in another field. Others are still waiting to see where God calls. The 11 graduates and 6 certificate students are United Methodists, Mennonites, Episcopalians and "none of the above."

Students have already begun the work that Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, the seminary commencement speaker, encouraged them to do. "You are asking how to be church differently," Soto Albrecht said. "Examine the container that we call church and examine what we put in the container. Sometimes the church becomes a holy bubble that no one can touch. Sometimes we need to burst that bubble."

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Lindsey Kolb

Elizabeth Soto Albrecht addresses EMS graduates April 26.

Soto Albrecht is the first Hispanic woman to be moderator of Mennonite Church USA. She is also coordinator of field education at Lancaster (Pa.) Theological Seminary.

"The church is in the middle of major changes," she said. "Lift up your prophetic voices but always stay within the church, because once you are outside you can't change it. Be the change you wish to see."

Ten students received master of divinity degrees this year. One student received a master of arts in church leadership degree, and six students received certificates in ministry studies. This was a small class by recent standards, but vice-president and seminary dean Michael King noted that class sizes typically vary year to year and the graduating class of 2015 is expected to be larger than usual.—*EMS*

Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., 467 graduates, April 27

Under a postcard-perfect blue sky at Eastern Mennonite University, 467 members of the graduating class of 2014 heard Nobel Peace Laureate Leymah Gbowee call them to "take action in the present" rather than be paralyzed by uncertainty about what their future holds.

"Begin with what you have," she said, using "your little gift to change the world."

Gbowee referred with pride to being a graduate of EMU (she earned a master's degree in conflict transformation in 2007) and to being the mother of a 2014 graduate, Joshua Mensah. "My home is 5,000 miles away from this campus, but this is a place that is very close to my heart."

She said she chose EMU for her eldest son because she wanted a university with "a whole lot of Jesus and lots of churches" in the vicinity but "limited partying."

Michael Sheeler

Leymah Gbowee does a dance move to celebrate the graduation from EMU of her eldest child, Joshua Mensah (behind her).

Mensah, a digital media major, was one of 351 students receiving bachelor's degrees. Eighty graduate degrees were conferred, including the first graduates from EMU's two-year-old master of arts in biomedicine program. Graduate certificates, associate degrees and pastoral ministry degrees were also conferred.

Among the thousands of family members and friends in the audience were 10 relatives of Andrew Thorne, a well-known figure on campus for his basketball prowess. Less well-known is that he flunked out of EMU after his freshman year. Thorne appealed for readmission, hoping to prove he could be the first member of his extended family to finish college. The following years were not smooth, including at least one brush with the law. But, in Thorne's words, basketball coach Kirby Dean "stayed in my ear to push me along and to be honest. He never gave up, and he's been getting on my nerves for four years. But that's what people need."

Thorne's 27-year-old brother (named James like his father) got leave from his work as a Norfolk-based petty officer in the U.S. Navy to be present. "I knew he was going to make it," said his brother, though "it was not an easy ride for him." Their mother, Wanda, said she is sure "Drew is going to be successful; he's proven that he can overcome a lot of obstacles in his life."—*EMU*

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Mennonite schools (continued)

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Bethel College yet to come

Goshen (Ind.) College
246 graduates, April 27

Members of Goshen College's Class of 2014 received undergraduate and graduate degrees on April 27 after being advised by speaker Joyce Bontrager Lehman to make decisions in life with passion, courage and patience

The Class of 2014 consisted of 246 graduates who were awarded the following degrees: 159 Bachelor of Arts, 56 Bachelor of Science in nursing, 13 Bachelor of Science, 13 Master of Science as family nurse practitioners and five Master of Arts in environmental education.

In her commencement address, "The Imperative of Providence," Bontrager Lehman used the story of making the decision to come to Goshen College to teach accounting in 1997 and her subsequent decision to work for Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) as turning points in her own life of seeking providence.

Goshen College photo

Lissette Figueroa, a nursing major from Goshen, hugs a friend after receiving her diploma at Goshen College on April 27.

First, Bontrager Lehman advised the graduates to pursue passions and "do what you love." Though she acknowledged that accounting and business might not be everyone's passion, she gave a shout out to the business graduates and encouraged them to help solve global poverty.

Second, she said, have courage to take risks and make difficult decisions. "A lot of decisions are not made because of fear—financial fears, fear of uncertain consequences, fear of failure or even fear of what people will think," she said. "Bold decisions take courage, and it's not easy to walk through one open door without knowing exactly where it will lead."

Finally, Bontrager Lehman said that preparation takes time, and patience is needed, along with faith. "You need to get to be good at what it is you want to do," she said.

"So whatever it is—start your own business, find a cure for malaria, be a master teacher, take your family on a trip around the world, climb a mountain, run a marathon, write a novel—come to it with passion, with courage and with patience. Figure it out. Commit. And providence will move."

Bontrager Lehman was a program manager on the Financial Services for the Poor team at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, after working in international development with the Mennonite Economic Development Associates, World Bank and USAID. (See our September 2012 cover story.) Bontrager Lehman also taught accounting at Goshen College for two years (1997-1999). She grew up Amish in Kalona, Iowa, graduated from Eastern Mennonite University in 1965, received a master's degree from the Bentley Graduate School of Management and now lives in Keene, N.H.

At the baccalaureate worship service in the morning before commencement, President James E. Brenneman delivered a sermon titled "Footprints: Evidence of History and the Promise of Future."

"As evidence of history, footprints of past pilgrims may

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serve as our guides, but that cannot be the end of the story for you," he said. "It is also the case that your very own footprints leave trace evidence for others of where you've been. You bear some responsibility to leave some clues for others to learn from."

Almost 130 graduates took the Graduation Pledge of Social and Environmental Responsibility, a national program at more than 100 colleges and universities. By signing the pledge, the graduates promised to "explore and take into account the social and environmental consequences of any job I consider and will try to improve these aspects of any organizations for which I work."—*Goshen College*

Hesston (Kan.) College
158 graduates, May 11

Graduates of Hesston College's Class of 2014 were encouraged to take Hesston College values with them as they go everywhere during commencement exercises May 11.

Commencement speakers Joyce Huber, nursing faculty, and Marelby Mosquera, natural science faculty, spoke on "Passport for Your Dream: From Here to Everywhere," highlighting the values of Christian community, diverse cultures, caring and joy as important for graduates to carry with them in their life and professional journeys.

"Today as you graduate, take your passport, stamped with the Hesston College values you have experienced here; they will nurture your dreams as you go from here to everywhere," said Huber, who has been a member of the nursing faculty since 1973. Mosquera, a 2004 Hesston graduate, completed her first year as part of the science faculty.

Together they commissioned the graduates with a blessing from Philippians 4:23: "Receive and experience the amazing grace of the master, Jesus Christ, deep, deep within yourself."

Larry Bartel

Hesston
College

Hesston College natural science faculty member Marelby Mosquera (right) and nursing faculty member Joyce Huber (left) deliver a joint-address encouraging graduates May 11 to carry Hesston College values with them throughout life.

Presenting the student address were Nathan Peters of North Liberty, Iowa, and Hannah Weaver of Inola, Okla. Faculty and staff nominated student speakers, and their classmates chose them.

President Howard Keim conferred 158 degrees for the Class of 2014—60 associate of arts degrees, 14 associate of science degrees, 80 associate of applied arts and sciences degrees and four associate of general studies degrees.

Individual student groups were recognized in special ceremonies May 10. Paul Unruh, longtime Mennonite Disaster Service volunteer and member of the binational MDS Board of Directors and a 1958 Hesston Academy and 1960 Hesston College graduate, presented the message at a recognition ceremony for five students completing the Disaster Management Program.

Marcy Renollet, a 1995 Hesston College graduate and risk manager at Via Christi Hospitals Wichita (Kan.), Inc., presented the message at the nursing pinning ceremony recognizing 52 nursing graduates.

John Murray, lead pastor at Hesston Mennonite Church and a 1981 graduate, brought the message for two graduates at the pastoral ministries commissioning.

The Aviation department honored eight professional pilot graduates and seven air traffic control graduates. Ken Kropf, a Hesston College flight instructor, brought the message.
—*Hesston College*

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Latin American church leaders seek hope, shared identity

Seventh consultation since 1986 draws 137 Mennonite church leaders

In a context of widespread poverty, violence and competing religious currents, where do Anabaptist-Mennonite churches in Latin America find hope?

On Feb. 10-14, 137 Mennonite church leaders from 19 different countries gathered in Guatemala City for conversations around the theme “Toward a Ministry of Hope: Social Reality, Faith, Word and Pastoral Action.”

The “Seventh Consultation of Anabaptists in Latin America” sought to move forward in forging a stronger regional identity for Anabaptist-Mennonite groups in Latin America.

According to several participants who were present at the first consultation of Latin American church leaders in 1986, much has changed in the intervening years. “I was impressed that all the presenters were Spanish speakers, deeply rooted in a Latin American context, and by the depth of theological teaching,” said Tomás Orjuela Gutierrez, president of the Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia.

Sandra Campos, president of the Asociación Iglesias Cristianas Menonitas de Costa Rica, celebrated the active presence of women at the consultation. About half the participants were women. A significant number of youth also attended.

Plenary addresses challenged participants to a renewed commitment to a Christ-centered view of the church as a movement responding to human needs rather than a theological abstraction, an institution or a personal project of a charismatic pastor.

The church is a witness to the Good News, but we do not possess it.

“The church,” said Gilberto Flores in the opening session, “is a pilgrim people living in relationships—with Christ, with each other, and the society around them. ... This means that its theology must always be improvisational and dynamic.” Flores, from Guatemala, is associate conference minister in the Western District Conference of Mennonite Church USA.

“The church engages the world not as its owner,” he continued, invoking an image that would recur throughout the consultation, “but as its guest. The church is a witness to the Good News, but we do not possess it.”

Jenny Neme, director of the Justapaz in Colombia, noted that only a small portion of the violence in Colombia—as in most countries in Latin America—is directly linked to armed combatants. The majority of violent deaths are associated with domestic disputes, street crime, and narco-trafficking that often reflects the structural realities of poverty, unemployment and despair. In the midst of this suffering, hope emerges in the wholistic Christian witness of shalom.

“We are a people with gifts, talents and ministries, gathered in the name of Christ to share a message of nonviolence and hope,” she said. Neme spoke of the challenge of helping young men in Colombia find ways of resisting mandatory conscription into the army. She also called on Mennonites to integrate peace into every aspect of their daily lives and be open to forming alliances with other peace-minded Christians.

Daniel Schipani reminded participants that “God has hope in humanity,” and is “always inviting humans to a life of transformation into the image of Christ.” He also challenged Mennonites to think of discipleship as citizenship in the world, attentive to the ways that God is at work outside the formal structures of the church. Originally from Argentina, Schipani teaches at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

Ofelia García, who works with Mennonite Central Committee in Mexico, highlighted the liberating gift of giving and receiving forgiveness as an expression of the Spirit’s presence. Fernando Pérez, a pastor in Mexico, called on congregations to challenge the divisive forces of culture by becoming truly integrated communities.

César García, general secretary of Mennonite World Conference, spoke largely out of his context in Colombia. But participants from other regions expressed appreciation for his analysis of contemporary religious currents feeding into Anabaptist-Mennonite identity in Latin America.

García highlighted ecclesial models focused on reason (fundamentalist emphasis on doctrine), justice (liberationalist emphasis on social transformation), and experience (neo-Pentecostal emphasis on personal health, wealth and success), before describing an Anabaptist-Mennonite alternative understanding of the church rooted in Scripture, discipleship, worship and peacemaking.

The goal, García said, is not to defend a distinctive identity out of arrogance or as an end in itself but out of faithfulness to the gospel in ways that seek to break down boundaries.

Several participants described the event as a landmark moment in an emerging Latin American Mennonite identity.

“Gatherings like this,” said Egdy Zambrano, pastor in the Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Ecuatoriana, “remind us that we are not alone.”

The consultation was sponsored by Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite World Conference and the Iglesia Evangélica Menonita de Guatemala.—*John D. Roth*

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Russian video seminary addresses religious pluralism

David Shenk's lectures are reaching many across Central Asia.

Trinity Video Seminary (TVS) in Kursk, Russia, recorded a new video course taught by David Shenk in March. "What Difference Does Jesus Make in a World of Many Religions?" will be made available in several languages through the Internet.

"David has so much he could share. His experiences could help many people, and the course we recently videotaped is so needed," says Aleksandr Spichak, academic dean at TVS. "People need to know what difference Jesus makes. David travels so much, but he cannot teach at two places at the same time. If his seminars are videotaped, many people can learn what is so unique about Christianity at any time and place."

Shenk, global consultant for Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM), described the ways the gospel is heard as good news within the context of other religious belief systems throughout the video course. The lectures were structured around the three ultimate questions asked by almost everyone: What is the purpose of life? How can I deal with my shortcomings and find forgiveness? What is the meaning of death?

"Religious pluralism is an issue the whole region of Central Asia is addressing," says Shenk. "Each religion offers answers to each of the three ultimate questions. People will consider the gospel answers to those questions if they come to believe that the gospel is good news and that it is true."

Shenk drew much of the course content from his book *Global God: Exploring the Role of Religions in Modern Societies*. The final course will include more than 50 video segments totaling just over 25 hours of instruction.

The lectures were structured around the three ultimate questions asked by almost everyone.

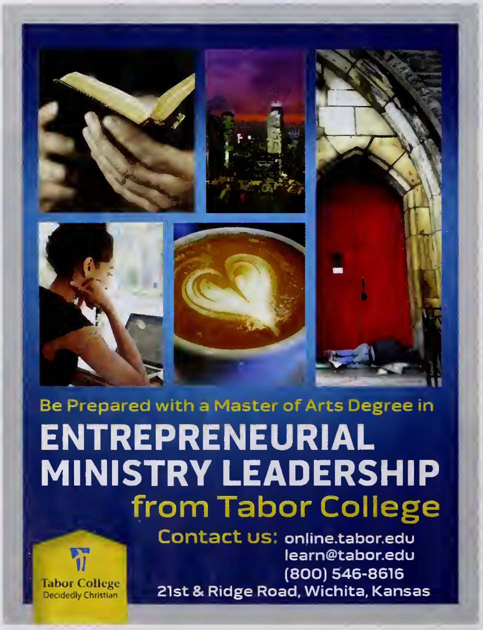
TVS's first work with Shenk happened three years ago, when he taught a 20-segment video course titled "The Gospel in Lively Engagement with Islam." The videos are now available in several languages through the Internet, and the Russian translation is being widely received across the region.

"Responses from Muslims about my understanding of Islam are generally positive," says Shenk. "A cursory overview of the feedback reveals that a good number of respondents state that the gospel as presented in this course merits careful consideration and discussion by Muslims. I do not mean that there have been no negative comments, but the spirit of the responses on the whole is remarkably positive."

TVS was originally founded as a two-year residential Bible college in 1998. Over several years, seminary administrators observed that while many pastors could not afford to leave their work and families for two years, there was a high level of interest in their courses throughout Central Asia. In 2005, they began recording class lectures on DVD and sending them to interested pastors and church leaders. Shortly after that they developed a professional video studio with cameras, lighting and sound equipment and began offering video courses through the Internet.

"Our courses are accredited by Euro-Asian Accrediting Association and could be used in bachelor's or master's programs in many seminaries in the post-Soviet Union," says Spichak. "We are so grateful to God for sending David to teach with us. We were impressed by his endurance. He could teach on video for eight hours a day; our young workers were tired, but he could go on and on."

The seminary is now working on editing and translating the lectures, with plans to release the course to the public in a few months.—*Chris Fretz of EMM*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Seminary begins new involvement in central Kansas

AMBS—Kansas Center will offer one course each term, four per year.

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind., will begin a stepped-down level of involvement in central Kansas this summer, continuing to offer some courses while also exploring additional ways to provide resources in the area.

AMBS has received accreditation approval for an "ongoing course offering site," which will be named AMBS–Kansas Center. June 30 will mark the end of the current AMBS–Great Plains Extension and the beginning of AMBS–Kansas Center with a simpler structure. The new program will offer one course each term—fall, interterm, spring and summer—for students pursuing a master's degree from AMBS and students who wish to take occasional courses. Those pursuing a degree in ministry will be enrolled in the seminary's distance program, Master of Divinity Connect.

Rebecca Slough, AMBS academic dean, reports that this new program will focus on courses especially applicable to churches in the area, including rural ministry and faith formation in the context of the prairies.

In addition to the master's level courses, AMBS–Kansas Center will explore ministry and theological resources in partnership with organizations and institutions in the region, including Anabaptist-related colleges and Western District and South Central Conferences. These partnerships and continuing education options will be pursued in the next months.

> The new program will focus on courses especially applicable to churches in the area.

An administrative team is being formed to guide the work of AMBS–Kansas Center with members representing churches and organizations in the area and AMBS.

A celebration of AMBS–Great Plains Extension and the earlier Conference-based Theological Education program is set for June 1 at Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton, Kan. The event will include a service of thanksgiving for the ministry and theological resources offered over the last 34 years along with celebration of the beginning of AMBS–Kansas Center.—*AMBS*

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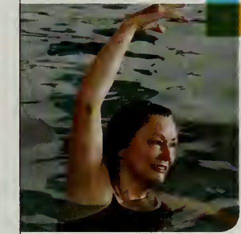

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The decision to disinvite John Howard Yoder to speak

An interview with James C. Juhnke, former history professor at Bethel College

Editor's note: Allegations of sexual misconduct led the Church Life Commission of the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference to suspend the ministerial credentials of Mennonite theologian and author John Howard Yoder on June 27, 1992. Earlier that year, Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., disinvited Yoder from speaking at a conference. In the following interview, James Juhnke explains his role in that decision and how it took place.—*Gordon Houser*

How were you involved with the decision by Bethel College in April 1992 to disinvite John Howard Yoder from his role as keynote speaker at a conference on campus?

For two years I worked on planning and raising funds for an April 10-12 conference at Bethel entitled "Violence and Nonviolence in the American Experience." My strategy was to get John Howard Yoder to agree to be the keynote speaker and then use his name to attract other participants. That strategy worked well. We had a great line-up of excellent scholars on the program. When Bethel became aware of Yoder's abusive treatment of women, we had extensive discussions on campus. I worried that Bethel's decision would undermine our conference.

Didn't you know about Yoder's reputation at the time you invited him?

I was not well informed. As far as I knew, Yoder had left Anabaptist [then Associated] Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., in 1984 because he wanted to move up the academic ladder. Later I learned that at the time of Yoder's dismissal, AMBS had agreed not to release any information about his controversial behavior. In retrospect, this appears to be part of an unfortunate "conspiracy of silence" that protected Yoder. Of course, colleges and seminaries typically do not publicize the reasons their employees are fired. In a broader historical context, we know that enforced secrecy has long been an effective arsenal of defense by men who abuse women. Contributing to the silence was the fact that the women abused by Yoder did not come forward with their stories. Many folks in the AMBS community, I learned, were remarkably ill informed about what Yoder had done.

Why was it important for you to have Yoder at your conference?

One of my central passions as a history teacher was to interpret main themes in American history from the viewpoint of Christian pacifist values. Back in 1965, I was a graduate student at Indiana University when Yoder circulated an unpublished memorandum entitled "The Search for a Nonresistant Historiography." His theological argument and historical examples were immensely stimulating. During my teaching career at Bethel College I sought ways to teach American history from that revisionist pacifist viewpoint. I corresponded intermittently with Yoder about this challenge In the 1990s, as I faced the conclusion of my teaching career I wanted to write a revisionist pacifist history of the United States. The conference in 1992 was one step toward that goal.

How did you and Bethel College become aware of Yoder's abuse of women? What brought down the "conspiracy of silence"?

The times were changing. In 1991, there was a national media frenzy over Anita Hill's testimony at the Senate hearings on the nomination of Clarence Thomas for the Supreme Court. Hill testified that Thomas had sexually harassed her. Thomas claimed to be a victim of a modern-day lynching. I remember watching with great interest the news coverage of the hearings. I assumed that Hill was telling the truth and that Thomas was lying. The Clarence Thomas hearings helped launch modern public awareness about sexual harassment issues.

> The Clarence Thomas hearings helped launch modern public awareness about sexual harassment issues.

Do you think the Clarence Thomas case affected Mennonite attitudes?

That would be difficult to document. But something did lead Mennonite agencies to an unprecedented focus on the issue. In the early 1990s, the Mennonites, along with other denominations, put the issue of men's violence against women toward the top of their agenda. There were many important conferences. In November 1990, the Mennonite Central Committee Domestic Violence Task Force sponsored a conference in California about violence and sexual abuse in the family. In October 1991, the Institute of Mennonite Studies and the Peace Program at AMBS sponsored a consultation on violence against women. In February 1992, the General Conference Mennonite Church's Commission on Education and the Mennonite Church's Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries sponsored a consultation at Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp in Colorado entitled "Men Working to End Violence Against Women." That consultation was modeled after an interdenominational meeting of the National Council of Churches that had impressed Mennonite participants. In the summer of 1992, the GCMC triennial conference in Sioux Falls, S.D., adopted a "Resolution Against Personal Abuse."

The February 1992 meeting in Colorado took place two months before our "Violence and Nonviolence in American History" conference at Bethel College. Mennonite leaders in Colorado promised to do something positive about patriarchal violence. The case of John Howard Yoder was discussed there, including some testimony from his victims. It was natural for freshly motivated people to focus on Yoder's prospective appearance at Bethel. Three men (Fred Loganbill, Ken Hawkley, and Gordon Houser) wrote on Feb. 13, 1992, to President John Zehr: "We have learned that Dr. Yoder has sexually abused at least 30 women. Many of these women first met him at conferences like this one, we understand. We do not want more women abused by him." I never saw the list of 30 names. But Bethel had to respond.

Were the charges against Yoder credible? Did you at Bethel do anything to check whether the charges were true?

We had only about two months until our conference started on April 10. On Feb. 15, I had a long telephone conversation with Yoder. He told me, "Seven years ago I formally asked to meet with and have the opportunity to apologize to whoever was making the allegations." I asked if he was willing today to meet the alleged victims and apologize to them. He said, "I have asked for the opportunity for seven years." I then did my own research in talks with current and former staff and students at AMBS (including president Marlin Miller) and with several of Yoder's victims. Their claims were credible. Yoder repeatedly introduced explicit sexual dimensions into relationships with women, taking advantage of his authority as a powerful mentor who faced vulnerable students. As long as he did not engage in sexual intercourse with them, he was able to rationalize his behavior as acceptable and even therapeutic.

On the Bethel campus, the faculty and students engaged in vigorous discussion of the disinvitation, both before and after Feb. 21, when President Zehr wrote to Yoder that until "serious accusations of a moral and ethical nature" were resolved, "the General Conference Mennonite Church and Bethel College community will be better served if you were not to participate." I wrote a letter to Yoder and told him I had talked with some of his victims. I tried to explain their viewpoint: "In so far as any woman has, at any level, accommodated your invitation for mutual sexual gratification, she cannot 'go public' without condemning herself. Even if she resisted your proposals from the beginning, she is likely to blame herself for having elicited advances and to assume that others would blame her, even if she is innocent. These women really do feel frightened and powerless."

Who at Bethel was involved in the actual decision?

In my files is a memo from president Zehr's secretary dated Feb. 18, 1992, inviting 10 people—faculty and administrators—to an ad hoc committee meeting. Included on the list was Robert Hinshaw, director of the Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution. KIPCOR was the agency on campus that was officially responsible for the conference on Violence and Nonviolence in the American Experience. Louise Hawkley, administrative assistant in the KIPCOR office, did most of the detail work for the conference and the editing of the conference papers for publication. Zehr made the final decision.

How did you fill Yoder's place as keynote speaker at your conference?

I asked Duane Friesen, a teacher in the Bible and religion department at Bethel, to take Yoder's place. He refused. It was too late to find someone else. With more than a little anxiety, I decided to do it myself. I took off time from teaching and wrote a "Manifesto for the Nonviolent Reinterpretation of American History." I realized that conference participants were disappointed not to hear Yoder. But for me it turned into an opportunity to present to a wider public my own thinking about the agenda for Christian pacifist historians. That address, "Manifesto for a Pacifist Reinterpretation of American History," was published in *Fides et Historia*, the journal of the Conference on Faith and History.

On the Bethel campus, the faculty and students engaged in vigorous discussion of the disinvitation.

Did the Bethel faculty and students support the decision to disinvite Yoder?

We were divided on the issue. My impression was that most people on campus wanted Bethel to go ahead with the invitation. My wife, Anna Kreider Juhnke, a teacher in the English department, was a feminist. She said that if Yoder were to speak at Bethel in this context, she would join protesting picketers outside Krehbiel Auditorium. On the other side, the March 5, 1992, issue of the student newspaper, *The Bethel Collegian*, printed criticisms of the disinvitation by Don Lemons, physics professor, Thane Chastain, manager of the radio station, and Nancy Leppert, a sophomore student. "What happened to 'innocent until proven guilty'?" asked Leppert. Lemons argued that colleges and universities must "provide for the absolute free discussion of ideas" regardless of the character of the proponents.

Did the disinvitation of Yoder in fact "break the silence" about his abuse of women?

Bethel did not attempt to hide the issues. The coverage of the issue in the *Collegian* apparently emboldened Paul

Schrag, editor of *Mennonite Weekly Review*, to publish something about the issue for a wider audience. Schrag wrote an article that appeared in the March 12, 1992, issue, "Bethel Withdraws Invitation for Theologian to Speak; Sexual Misconduct Alleged." That article was the first time anything about Yoder and his problems had appeared in the denominational or secular press. It was if a dam had broken. Other Mennonite and non-Mennonite publications reported on the issue. In July, Tom Price, religion editor of *The Elkhart Truth*, wrote a series of articles exposing his misbehavior and its consequences. (See "Price Told the John Howard Yoder Story" in our October 2013 issue, page 44.) It would not be accurate to say that Bethel College intended to "break the silence" on the Yoder case. But we did inadvertently play a part in that outcome.

Some readers of *Mennonite Weekly Review* were critical of Bethel's decision. Two women, wives of professors at AMBS (Winifred Waltner and Juliette Kuitse) wrote letters to the editor accusing Yoder's alleged victims of bitterness and revenge. One reader (Brian D. Arbuckle) said that Zehr and Juhnke lacked integrity. "They have shown by their wimpish concern for political correctness that due process is not important," he wrote.

How did the event affect your relationship with Yoder?

Yoder was not upset or angry. He said this was not the first time he had been refused. I sent him a draft of my substitute keynote speech, and he sent helpful comments in two separate letters. Later, when we published the proceedings of the April conference, we invited Yoder to contribute an essay to our book based on his reading of the papers. His essay, "The Burden and Discipline of Evangelical Revisionism," appeared as Chapter 3 in *Nonviolent America: History Through the Eyes of Peace*. In subsequent years, when Carol Hunter of Earlham College, Richmond, Ind., and I wrote our book *The Missing Peace: The Search for Nonviolent Alternatives in United States History* (Pandora Press, 2001, 2004), Yoder kept in touch with suggestions for the project.

Yoder's case continues to get popular attention more than two decades after the 1992 conference. Why does it not go away?

Yoder died in 1997, but his theological reputation and influence are growing. His victims and their supporters are still hurting. There are many elements in this story that I know little about, including Yoder's reconciliation with his congregation, Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Elkhart, Ind., and the decision by the Indiana-Michigan Conference to withdraw his pastoral credentials. Neither do I know about the dynamics of the community of his victims. I assume that the issue is still alive in part because patriarchal violence against women remains rampant in American society.

As you consider this case in retrospect, should the disinvitation of Yoder be a matter of pride for Bethel College?

Probably not. It was something we fell into accidentally. Our decision was more to protect Bethel College and the planned conference than it was to make a clear statement about male abuse of women. We did not do anything noteworthy on behalf of the women who had been abused. More important than the disinvitation itself was the fact that Yoder's case broke into the Mennonite press for the first time. The editors of *The Bethel Collegian* were not aware that their coverage of the issue had significance for the Mennonite denomination beyond the campus. They were simply reporting about events that had taken place on their own turf.

I read an essay by Ruth Krall, a former teacher at Goshen (Ind.) College, who wrote an extensive manuscript on John Yoder, male abuse of women, and the Mennonite church. Krall called the events at Bethel College a "pivotal moment." She said the moment "needs to be further explored when church documents become unsealed and unrestricted." In fact, the relevant documents for this event are all open and available at the Mennonite Library and Archive at Bethel. These include the files of President John Zehr and the files of the GCMC Commission on Education. I still have my own files at home. They are available to anyone interested.—*James C. Juhnke retired as professor of history at Bethel College in 2002.*

A discernment group to continue healing and reconciliation work in the wake of John Howard Yoder's abuse of women and ongoing questions about how the church responded to it has identified several goals for its work:

- Review the evidence to document the scope of Yoder's abuse and the church's response to it.
- Publicly thank the women who "tenaciously persisted over many years to bring [Yoder's] abuse to light to prevent further victimizations and to seek healing" and also thank "those in church leadership who worked hard to hold [Yoder] accountable with a desire for his restoration."
- Work through area conference leaders and the Mennonite Church USA website to provide resources for victims of sexual abuse and to encourage educational experiences to prepare pastors and leaders for caring for abuse victims.
- Arrange for a public service of lament, repentance and healing at a large church gathering, most likely the 2015 convention.
- Explore the possibility of a denominational statement addressing sexual abuse.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Also, see www.mennoniteusa.org/executive-board/transformative-peacemaking/a-way-forward/frequently-asked-questions/

CALENDAR

Bridgefolk, the Mennonite-Catholic ecumenical organization, will hold its 13th annual conference July 24-27 at St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minn., under the theme **"Mennonites and Catholics: Service—an Overflow of Christ's Love."** Speakers include Vincent Guider of the North Lawndale Kinship Initiative in Chicago and Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, moderator of Mennonite Church USA.

WORKERS

Honigmann, Ralph, was licensed as youth leader at Blainsport Mennonite Church, Reinholds, Pa., on March 30.

Honigmann, Val, was licensed as youth leader at Blainsport Mennonite Church, Reinholds, Pa., on March 30.

Landis, D. Isaac, was ordained as pastor at Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan., on May 18.

Landis, Karl, was ordained as lead pastor at Mount Joy Mennonite Church, Mount Joy, Pa., on March 30.

McLain, Jeffrey, was licensed as associate pastor for young adults and families and community connections at East Petersburg Mennonite Church, East Petersburg, Pa., on Feb. 2.

Wenrich, Jonathan, was ordained as deacon at Blainsport Mennonite Church, Reinholds, Pa., on March 30.

Wise, Clint, was licensed as youth leader at Blainsport Mennonite Church, Reinholds, Pa., on March 30.

Wise, Kristin, was licensed as youth leader at Blainsport Mennonite Church, Reinholds, Pa., on March 30.

OBITUARIES

Amstutz, Judy Ebersole, 80, Wheat Ridge, Colo., died April 5, of cancer. Spouse: Mahlon Amstutz. Parents: Clarence and Ruth Ebersole. Children: Lynn Amstutz Ferguson, Lori Campbell, Rita Sommers, Rod; six grandchildren. Funeral: April 15 at First Mennonite Church, Denver, Colo.

Auernheimer, LaVeta Sasser, 79, Reedley, Calif., died March 26. Spouse: Bruce Auernheimer. Parents: Munroe and Ruth Sasser. Children: Eldon Nasalroad, Beccy and Bill Howard, LaNette and Richard Maioreollo, Tim and Stacy Nasalroad, Jayna and Roger Howard, Kelly Nasalroad; step-children:Robert and Kim Auernheimer, Caroline and Gerald Savage, Christine Abraham; 20 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Memorial service: April 26 at First Mennonite Church, Reedley.

Burkholder, Paul Herbert, 87, Stouffville, Ontario, died March 29. Spouse: Eva Alvina Reesor Burkholder (deceased). Parents: Rev. Lewis Joseph and Emma Meyer Burkholder. Children: David, Robert, Mary Friesen, Nancy, Laura Trauzzi, Barbara Pauls; 12 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 2 at Rouge Valley Mennonite Church, Markham, Ontario.

Friesen, Henry Z. Friesen, 90, Milford, Neb., died April 21. Spouse: Marcille Roth Friesen Stutzman. Parents: Jacob R. and Katie Classen Friesen. Children: Wendell, Orv, Ele Siemens; eight grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren; three great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: four step-children; 12 step-grandchildren; 22 step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 23 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford.

Friesen, William "Bill" L., 97, died March 26, 2014, at Kidron Bethel Village in North Newton. He was born July 9, 1916, to Bernhard A. Friesen and Katie (Abrahams) Friesen on a farm near Henderson, Neb. A resident of North Newton most of his life, Bill taught at Bethel College, managed the college farm, served as the business manager and treasurer of the General Conference Mennonite Church, and as president to Showalter Foundation. On Nov. 30, 1944, he married Margaret Reimer in Beatrice, Neb. She survives. Other survivors include: two sons, Randall and Warren; daughter, Michelle Friesen-Carper; brother, Elmer; sisters, Martha Friesen and Nina Heiser; six grandchildren; and four great-grandsons. He was preceded in death by his parents; infant sister, Alma; and sister, Goldie Peters.

Gering, Vernon W., 95, Freeman, S.D., died April 16. Spouse: Irene Graber Gering (deceased). Parents: John C. and Maria Miller Gering. Children: Don, Nancy Halvorson, Charles, Crystal Nelson, Randall; nine grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 16 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Geiser, Bonnie June Lehman, 60, Orrville, Ohio, died April 21 of leukemia. Spouse: Ron Geiser. Parents: Willis and Sarean Amstutz Geiser. Children: Travis, Darren, Andrew. Funeral: May 24 at Sonnenberg Mennonite Church, Kidron, Ohio.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Good, Avon Jean Yoder, 74, Grantsville, Md., died April 11. Spouse: Paul Edward Good (deceased). Parents: Alva Roy and Ruth E. Eash Yoder. Children: Michael Eby-Good, Carol Good-Elliott; four grandchildren. Funeral: April 15 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Goshow, Miriam A. Detweiler, 95, Souderton, Pa., died March 27. Spouse: Abram M. Goshow (deceased). Parents: Irwin and Edna Anglemoyer Detweiler. Children: David, James, Carroll, Karen Henrichsen; 10 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 5 at Souderton Mennonite Church.

Gross, Janice R. Ruth, 73, Perkasie, Pa., died April 13. Spouse: Richard L. Gross. Parents: Norman and Mildred Moyer Ruth. Child: Kenneth S.; three grandchildren. Funeral: April 17 at Bernard Suess Funeral Home, Perkasie.

Heidebrecht, James, 82, Hesston, Kan., died April 16. Spouse: Bonnie Zerger Heidebrecht. Parents: Gus and Helen Friesen Heidebrecht. Children: Jan Worley, Glen; six grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 26 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Heinrichs, Schmidt Susanna, 102, Altona, Manitoba, died May 1. Spouse: Peter W. Schmidt (deceased). Spouse: Henry L. Heinrichs (deceased). Parents: John G. and Susanna Rempel. Children: Mary Janzen, Harry Schmidt, Clara Rempel, Harvey Schmidt; 11 grandchildren; 28 great-grandchildren; four great-great-grandchildren; five stepchildren and families. Funeral: May 7 at Bergthaler Church.

Hershberger, DeElda L. Eicher, 95, Milford, Neb., died March 12. Spouse: Edgar A. Hershberger (deceased). Parents: Warren A. and Anna Kremer Eicher. Children: Gordon, Gregory, Ray; seven grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 16 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford.

Hofer, Sarah Mendel, 84, Freeman, S.D., died April 13. Spouse: LeRoy D. Hofer. Parents: Jacob H. and Sarah Wollman Mendel. Children: Carlos, Bruce, Geraldine Palumbo; eight grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 19 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Jones, Catherine Horrisberger, 94, Sarasota, Fla., formerly of Marshallville, Ohio, died March 17. Spouse: Albert Jones (deceased). Parents: Albert and Lydia Kolb Horrisberger. Children: Phyllis, Janice Ebersole, Karen Jones, Don; six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 29 at Palms-Robarts Funeral Home, Wauchula, Fla.

Kauffman, Paul S., 97, Kalispell, Mont., died Feb. 27. Spouse: Esther Borntrager Kauffman (deceased). Parents: Norman Leroy and Anna Grace Snyder Kauffman. Children: Elaine, Daniel, Kenneth, Stephen, Brenda Younger, Alice Arneson, Eileen, Arlene, Rebecca; 13 grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 8 at Mountain View Mennonite Church, Kalispell.

Kehler, Ruby Warkentin, 92, Reedley, Calif., died April 14. Spouse: Frank Kehler (deceased). Parents: Herman and Susie Warkentin. Children: Cathleen Durham, Sharon Nikkel, Ruth Hill, Mark; seven grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 21 at Reedley Cemetery.

Kennedy, Arvilla "Janey" Grieser, 89, Archbold, Ohio, died April 7. Spouse: Amos "Ed" Kennedy. Parents: Harvey and Ilva Stuckey Grieser. Children: Lisa Wisse, Mike; six grandchildren. Funeral: April 11 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Klempel, Howard Gustav, 88, Aberdeen, Idaho, died April 10. Spouse: Joyce Ann Ruff Klempel. Parents: Frank Joseph and Elsie Hunsinger Klempel. Children: Donald, Russell, Kelly; seven grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Guneral: April 22 at First Mennonite Church, Aberdeen.

Knutson, Anna Miriam Dunn, 37, Dalton, Ohio, died Nov. 17, 2013, of cancer. Spouse: Joe Knutson. Parents: Peter and LeAnna Gerber Dunn. Funeral: Nov. 23 at Kidron Mennonite Church, Kidron.

Kohfeld, Ruth Peters, 95, Reedley, Calif., died April 13 following a brief illness. Spouse: Walt Kohfeld. Parents: John and Kate Beese Peters. Children: D. Bruce, Ray; two grandchildren. Funeral: April 22 at Reedley Cemetery.

Leatherman, Mary L., 73, Hatfield, Pa., died May 1. Parents: Samuel D. and Ada B. Lewis Leatherman. Funeral: May 7 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Luther, Frances M. Birky Whitmer, 88 Hesston, Kan., died April 9. Spouse: Martin R. Luther (deceased). Charles Walter "Walt" Whitmer (deceased). Parents: William and Anna Bechler Birky. Children: Gerald Whitmer, Virginia Nunemaker, Karen Bachman, Lyle Whitmer; step-children: Betty Jennings, Vera Kirby, Richard Luther, Gene Luther; six grandchildren; fou great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 14 at Open Door Fellowship, Kouts, Ind.

Martin, Karen Joyce Nofziger, 68, Evanston, Ill., died April 21 of early onset Alzheimer's Disease. Spouse: Richard Eugene Martin. Parents: Alfred E. and Marjorie Ellen Gerig Nofziger. Children: Matthew, Janna Martin, Joy Manduno; two grandchildren. Funeral: May 3 at Evanston Friends Meeting House.

Miller, Ruth D. Yoder, 86, Goshen, Ind., died April 25. Spouse: Marvin J. Miller (deceased). Parents: Menno and Catherine Schlabach Yoder. Children: Sandra Miller-Givan, Dallas, Nathan, Arnold, Anthony; 10 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 29 at Miller-Stewart Funeral Home, Middlebury, Ind.

Mishler, Evelyn Regina Miller, 89, Shipshewana, Ind., died April 25, of complications of Alzheimer's disease. Spouse: Paul Mishler. Parents: Clarence E. and Audra Crampton Miller. Children: Sharon Schrock, Judith Mishler, Carol Piper, Steve; honorary sons: Rubin Lozano, Rene Lozano; two grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 29 at Shore Mennonite Church, Shipshewana.

Mohr, Ron, 61, Elkhart, Ind., died April 29. Spouse: Annie Troyer Mohr. Parents: Louis F. and Lurline Mae Frommel Mohr. Children: Michael, Marlene Mohr Marks; four grandchildren. Funeral: May 3 at Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Musselman, Homer Drissel, 93, Souderton, Pa., died April 29. Spouse: Grace L. Schlosser Musselman (deceased). Parents: Melvin and Ella Drissel Musselman. Children: Linda Gehman, Roy, Betsy McCrorie; 13 grandchildren; 20 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 2 at Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield, Pa.

Odour, Castro Ochieng, 20, South Bend, Ind., died April 18. Parents: Leonard Amouk and Eunice Odour. Siblings: Sylia Odour, Wendy Odour, Brian Otieno. Funeral: April 26 at Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend.

Paden, Roxanne, 52, Belleville, Pa., died April 1, of cancer. Parents: Tom and Freida Paden. Funeral: April 4 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville.

Payne, Lydia Jean Banwart, 80, Pulaski, Iowa, died April 22. Spouse: Donald William Payne (deceased). Parents: Nathan Alfred and Esther Ruth Kropf Banwart. Children: Debra Knapp, Donnita Payne Hostetler, Daniel, Dwayne David; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 25 at Pulaski Mennonite Church.

Rice, Alverda Leatherman, 82, Pipersville, Pa., died April 17. Spouse: Noah S. Rice. Parents: Jacob G. and Bessie Detweiler Leatherman. Children: Laverne, Jacob, Donald, David, Delores Nice, Beth Imchen; 18 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 22 at Deep Run East Mennonite Church, Perkasie, Pa.

Rittenhouse, Brenda Feusner, 74, Lansdale, Pa., died May 3. Spouse: David M. Rittenhouse. Parents: Ernest and Emma Knipe Feusner. Children: David A., Debra Cribbs, Dayle, Denise Wismer; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: May 8 at Plains Mennonite Church, Hatfield, Pa.

Springer, Melvin, 72, Hopedale, Ill., died April 21. Spouse: Patty Staker Springer. Parents: Elmer J. and Anna B. Stalter Springer. Children: Rebecca Meissner, Cindy Lawhorne, Sally Griffith; three grandchildren. Funeral: April 25 at Hopedale Mennonite Church.

Stauffer, Frances Lucile Christophel, 102, Goshen, Ind., died March 16. Spouse: Earl R. Stauffer (deceased). Parents: Elmer and Mary Hartman Christophel. Children: Norman Clair, Loren Alan; six grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: March 31 at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Tyson, Ruth Lucille Bixler, 91, Goshen, Ind., died Dec. 26, 2013. Spouse: Raymond Tyson. Parents: Fred and Martha Beutler Bixler. Children: Becky Tyson Blosser, Brenda Buller, Kerm; 15 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Dec. 30 at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Unruh, Douglas LaMonte, 59, Perryton, Texas, died March 27. Spouse: Patsy Ann King Unruh. Parents: Eli Winifred and Inez Marjorie Holdeman Unruh. Children: Monte Lee, Lisa Marie Unruh Beun, Catherine Jade "CJ" Unruh Byler; four grandchildren. Funeral: April 1 at Perryton Mennonite Church.

Weldy, Ruth E. Stahly, 76, Nappanee, Ind., died April 26. Spouse: David Weldy. Parents: Paul and Elsie Hostetler Stahly. Children: Michelle Oliver, Mark; six grandchildren. Funeral: April 30 at North Main Street Mennonite Church, Nappanee.

Wheeler, Steven Arthur, 57, Aberdeen, Idaho, died March 20, of cancer. Spouse: Rhonda Cluff Wheeler. Parents: Marvin and Norma Wheeler. Children: Stephanie Snyder, Mallory Wheeler, Mathew Wheeler; two grandchildren. Funeral: March 25 at Aberdeen Mennonite Church.

Williams, Dorothy Louise Locher, 94, Bluffton, Ohio, died April 2. Parents: Christian and Clara Suter Locher. Children: James D., Ronald J.; two grandchildren. Funeral: April 26 at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton.

Wysong, Elva B. Miller, 89, Goshen, Ind., died May 9. Spouse: Burdette "Ike" Wysong (deceased). Parents: Daniel R. and Ida R. Schrock Miller. Children: Diane Fisher, Jolene Coates; five grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; one great-great grandchild. Funeral: May 13 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Yoder, Gerald J., 98, Goshen, Ind., died April 10. Spouse: Maggie Yoder (deceased), Parents: Edwin J. and Molly Stoltzfus Yoder. Children: Wilmetta Maust, Warren, Wes, Waneta Riegsecker, Wealtha Helland; 14 grandchildren; 25 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 14 at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Yoder, Lester S., 76, Goshen, Ind., and Sarasota, Fla., died April 25. Spouse: Lucy Weirich Yoder. Parents: Sol and Sarah Stutzman Yoder. Children: Brenda Wilkinson, Lori Martin, Neal; seven grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Memorial service: May 9 at North Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) is seeking a **full-time communications specialist** in the Lititz Pa., office. The primary responsibility is to effectively shape, enable and promote the communications strategy of MDS' vision, mission and values. Applicants must be active in an Anabaptist church and committed to the Anabaptist faith and peace position. See the full job description at http://mds.mennonite.net/about-us/employment. Resumes may be sent to jobs@mds.mennonite.net or MDS, Attn: Human Resources, 583 Airport Rd, Lititz, PA 17543. Review of resumes begins mid-May. Recruitment continues until the position is filled.

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) is seeking a **full-time volunteer development team leader** in the Lititz, Pa., office. Duties include, but are not limited to leading the volunteer development staff team in recruiting, training and placing volunteers at MDS responses. This position also provides vision and strategy to grow the volunteer base within MDS. Applicants must be active in an Anabaptist church and committed to the Anabaptist faith and peace position. See the full job descriptions at mds.mennonite.net/about-us/employment. Resumes may be sent to jobs@mds.mennonite.net or MDS, 583 Airport Rd, Lititz, PA 17543, Attn: Human Resources. Review of applications begins mid-May. Recruitment continues until the positions are filled.

Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) is seeking a **part-time staff accountant** (30 hours) in the Lititz, Pa., office. Primary responsibilities include: month end closing and preparation of monthly financial statements, working with volunteer bookkeepers, reconciliations, general ledger, fixed assets and assistance with preparation and analysis of budgets. Working in an Excel and Quickbooks environment. Applicants must be active in an Anabaptist church and committed to the Anabaptist faith and peace position. See the full job descriptions at mds.mennonite.net/about-us/employment. Resumes may be sent to jobs@mds.mennonite.net or MDS, 583 Airport Rd, Lititz, PA 17543, Attn: Human Resources. Review of applications begins mid-May. Recruitment continues until the positions are filled.

Iowa Mennonite School has an opening for a half-time **art teacher** beginning in the 2014-15 school year. Also needed is a full-time, **one-year special education instructor** for the 2014-15 school year to fill in for a leave of absence. Interested applicants should send a letter of application (found on the IMS website iowamennonite.org under the "about IMS" tab) and credentials that include at least three references to Norm Yoder, Principal, Iowa Mennonite School, 1421 540th St. SW, Kalona, IA 52247. Questions: email to nyoder@iowamennonite.org.

The Fransen Family Foundation is accepting applications from 501(c)3 organizations for **micro-grants**. See details at fransenfamilyfoundation.org. Submission deadline is July 31, 2014.

Calling all artists. Greencroft Goshen is requesting proposals from artists (any medium) who would suggest ways to use art to honor two sets of donors on the Greencroft Goshen campus. Budget is up to $20,000. Deadline for RFPs is Aug. 1. One donor recognition piece would have the names of 90 donors but would need to be expandable. A second donor recognition piece would be static (permanent) with 460 names. For the complete specs on these projects, contact JimN@greencroft. org.

Explore God's love with the new **Shine Sunday school curriculum**! *Shine: Living in God's Light* has engaging stories and activities that will teach children the Bible, understand that they are known and loved by God, and learn what it means to follow Jesus. Find sample sessions, Bible outlines, and more at www.shinecurriculum.com.

Want a website? We spent time, energy and money building beautiful church-specific WordPress themes so you can focus on your message. For more info about reasonably priced managed hosting plans, call 1-888-868-7099 or email **info@mennonite.net**.

Kalona Mennonite Church of Kalona, Iowa, a congregation of about 250 members, is seeking a **full-time associate pastor**. This person will serve alongside a lead pastor and have normal preaching and administrative responsibilities. Other duties include a focus on youth and young adult ministries as well as nurturing spiritual growth and faith commitment. Interested persons can request a position description and congregational information by contacting Frank Yoder at franklin-yoder@uiowa.edu or conference minister Tim Detweiler at timdetweiler@centralplainsmc.org. All candidates must have an updated Ministerial Leadership Information Form (MLI) on file with MC USA.

Bethesda Mennonite Church, located in Henderson, Neb., is seeking a **full-time pastor** to be part of a multi-pastoral team. The candidate should have a strong commitment to Anabaptist values and theology along with strong preaching, communication and community outreach skills and interests. An M Div degree with pastoral experience is desired, but not required. The Bethesda congregation, located in rural Nebraska, is a member of Central Plains Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA. Interested persons should contact Central Plains Conference Minister, Tim Detweiler, PO Box 352, Kalona, Iowa 52247 or call 319-458-0224.

First Mennonite Church of San Francisco seeks a **half-time to three-quarter-time associate pastor** to partner with our pastor in serving our growing congregation. FMCSF is a vibrant, open and affirming, urban Anabaptist congregation of about 150, 20 percent of whom are children under the age of 18. Details: http://www.menno.org/.

Are you the one God has been preparing for us? **Fairview Mennonite Church** is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Located in rural northern Michigan, with weekly attendance around 100, the heart of FMC's vision is to build relationships in the community that meet people's needs. If you are interested in exploring possibilities at Fairview Mennonite Church, please email the search committee at fmcpastorsearch@gmail.com or call Don Haskin at 989-335-3153.

VP of finance. MHS Alliance, a national membership and consulting organization based in Goshen, Ind., seeks a **VP of finance** to serve as a key leader in our mission to support Anabaptist and other Christian nonprofits. Responsibilities include oversight of all financial management and accounting as well as representing MHS with Anabaptist and Peace Church constituencies. Minimum five years experience in financial operations and supervision. Graduate degree in accounting or related field preferred. If you want to use your skills in a church-affiliated setting, send cover letter and resume to hr@mhsonline.org or 1112 N. Main, Goshen, IN 46526.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read **Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

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RESOURCES

All Things in Common by Holly Grace Duane (Creation House, 2014, $13.99) calls for the body of Christ to embrace God's heart for the poor and explains why the Bible links giving to the poor with revival. It unpacks what it means to assist the poor while offering practical ways to do this in a biblical manner.

Ordinary Miracles: Awakening to the Holy Work of Parenting by Rachel Gerber (Herald Press, 2014, $12.99) gives voice to the grit of parenting with stories of hope. Gerber learns to discover the gifts and holy calling hidden in the events of harried family life.

What's in a Phrase: Pausing Where Scripture Gives You Praise by Marilyn Chandler McEntyre (Eerdmans, 2014, $14) offers reflections on more than 50 scriptural phrases that prompt readers to pay attention, to pause where we sense a beckoning. McEntyre encourages readers to see such "words within the Word" as invitations and, in doing so, to discover that they are places of divine encounter, epiphany or unexpected guidance.

Beginning with the Word: Modern Literature and the Question of Belief by Roger Lundin (BakerAcademic, 2014, $24.99) conducts a sustained theological dialogue with imaginative literature and with modern literary and cultural theory.

How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor by James K.A. Smith (Eerdmans, 2014, $16) is a practical philosophical guidebook, a kind of how-to manual on how to live in our secular age. It is also a reading guide to Charles Taylor's monumental work *A Secular Age* (2007).

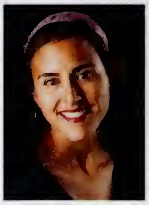
Instead of Atonement: The Bible's Salvation Story and Our Hope for Wholeness by Ted Grimsrud (Cascade Books, 2014, $31) traces the Bible's salvation story through God's liberating acts, the testimony of the prophets, and Jesus' life and teaching, then argues that Jesus' death gains its meaning when it exposes violence in the cultural, religious and political powers. God's raising of Jesus completes the story and vindicates Jesus.

Good News: The Advent of Salvation in the Gospel of Luke by Darrin W. Snyder Belousek (Liturgical Press, 2014, $16.95) explains the manifold message of "good news" through reflections on the stories and songs of Luke's telling of the coming of Jesus.

Strangers and Pilgrims Once More: Being Disciples of Jesus in a Post-Christendom World by Addison Hodges Hart (Eerdmans, 2014, $18) suggests how Christ's disciples can say yes to much that was preserved during the age of Christendom and why they should say no to some of the accretions of that passing epoch.

ONLINE

Mennonites on the margins: Haiam Shenk



Janet Trevino-Elizarraraz lives in San Antonio, Texas. She can be reached at alpasofirme@gmail.com.

My Mennonite neighbor welcomed me and my family only a few minutes after our moving truck arrived.

In my last column (February), I committed to bringing you stories of non-Mennonite people of color who serve Mennonite institutions and offer you a peek into their perspective in their work in Mennonite agencies. Not only is this a unique opportunity to meet someone you may not have known, but their perspective as an outsider can help us see ourselves differently.

I didn't know what to expect, and I put out a few feelers to see who would enjoy sharing their story. It was more difficult that I thought, but, thankfully, Mennonite Mission Network has a strong, diverse presence of people of color. It's encouraging to read positive stories like that of Haiam Shenk (right), who lives in Goshen, Ind. Thank you, Haiam Shenk, for sharing this encouraging perspective.

In what ways do you work or serve with Mennonites?

I work at Mennonite Mission Network with the Global Ministries team as assistant for Africa, West Asia and the Middle East. I also coordinate the International Ministry websites and the Council of International Anabaptist Ministries (CIM).

How did you meet Mennonites or how were you introduced to the job where you work?

The first person who welcomed me when I moved to Goshen was my Mennonite neighbor. She came to welcome me and my family, only a few minutes after our moving truck arrived, with a five-course meal, a big smile and godly love. Soon after that, we became friends, and she told me later, "I believe you should work for the church; you have that serving heart, passion for ministry, mission and God's work." When she learned about the opening for my current position, she introduced me to my now co-worker, who encouraged me to apply, and God did the rest.

From your perspective, how would you define Mennonites or Mennonite culture?

Mennonites are a group of Christian believers who believe in the Holy Trinity, Anabaptism and the Bible. The Mennonite church places strong emphasis on peacemaking, service around the world and living a Christ-centered life.

What has surprised you about your work with Mennonites?

Their openness and acceptance of having people with other beliefs working among them. I don't think all Christian denominations will allow that.

What challenges have you met with working with Mennonites?

The biggest challenge is my ignorance of Mennonite history and how it affects what's going on in the church today. Even though people are open to having me and others among them, I still sometimes feel like an outsider.

Have you considered joining a Mennonite community outside your work/service? If not, why not?

I don't see anything in Mennonite beliefs and mission that comes against my own beliefs to stop me from joining the Mennonite church. In fact, I visited a Mennonite church a few times, and I like it. I think I just have to find the church that meets our needs as a family.

Anything else you'd like to add to give us a peek into your Mennonite experience?

I have felt supported and respected by Mennonite Mission Network since I started working here. It is such a blessing to see and know there are people who apply the Word of God so truly to their lives and try to live out the Great Commission. It is a church that wants to spread the good news of Jesus Christ around the world, a church that loves and supports all people without looking at their color, a church that makes every effort to live in peace with all people. TM

The top 10 most influential Mennonites

Each year *Time* Magazine publishes a special issue featuring "The 100 Most Influential People." Whether or not one agrees with its list, it's fascinating to read.

By "influential" *Time* doesn't necessarily mean "powerful," as managing editor Nancy Gibbs writes in the May 5-12 issue. Influence, she writes, is subtle. "Power is a tool, influence is a skill."

Spectrum: *Time* divides its list into five categories: Titans, Pioneers, Artists, Leaders and Icons. This year's list includes 41 women and features people born on six continents, ranging in age from 16 to 78. They include Pope Francis and Abu Du'a, a key al-Qaeda in Iraq leader. They cross the political spectrum, from the Koch brothers to Tom Steyer. Influence may be positive or negative. It may be obvious or nuanced.

And *Time* does not simply list the 100 people and describe them. It also includes profiles that are really appreciations written by friends, admirers and mentors.

Unknowns: One value I find in the list is that it introduces me to people I may not have heard of before. For example, Bill Gates, who has appeared on the list four times, writes about Nigerian billionaire Aliko Dangote, who is fighting polio in Africa. Erwiana Sulistyaningsih is a migrant worker from Indonesia who endured months of torture from her Hong Kong employer and now advocates for better laws to protect migrant workers. Sister Rosemary Nyirumbe of Uganda helps girls who were forcibly enlisted as child soldiers find healing.

Celebrity culture: Such a list can be seen as a product of our celebrity culture, which tends to ignore the daily lives most people lead. And it certainly includes people who are celebrities. But it also includes people who work behind the scenes, who don't otherwise receive much publicity at all.

Hope: Reading about some of these people brings me hope. Although our world is littered with the destruction of powerful forces, there are also many people doing much good in our world. It seems important to celebrate that and let their lives inspire us to be better people in our own contexts.

Influential Mennonites: As I read through *Time*'s list and the articles about these influential people, I wondered what such a list might look like if we limited it to Mennonites. Who are the most influential Mennonites?

I already hear the objections. In our bones, we resist focusing on individuals or lifting some up as more important than others.

But we're discussing influence. Do we deny that some people in our midst have influence? What might we learn by naming them or at least debating who they might be? Is there some value to talking about influence?

Top 10: I imagine such a list—and I'm thinking 10, not 100—would range well beyond our institutional leaders. What about our artists? Who are our pioneers? Let's expand our list beyond our national borders, as *Time* did.

Are there Mennonites who represent a more negative than a positive influence?

An idea: If you're interested, send us your list of the 10 most influential Mennonites. Or any number up to 10. You may address me: gordonh@themennonite.org. We'll also post the question on our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/themennonite) and website, www.themennonite.org.

Whether or not you nominate someone, think about who has influenced you. What kind of tribute would you write about them? Have you thanked them?

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

FILM REVIEWS

Hateship Loveship (R) is adapted from a short story by Alice Munro, who won last year's Nobel Prize in Literature. Here, Kristen Wiig plays a quiet caregiver who starts a new job working for an elderly man and his teenage granddaughter, Sabitha. A cruel trick by Sabitha and her friend lands Johanna in an awkward one-way relationship with Ken, Sabitha's estranged father. It's a redemptive, almost fairy-tale story, quietly told. Wiig's performance stands out.—*Gordon Houser*

The Railway Man (R) is based on the true story of Eric Lomax, a former British Army officer tortured as a prisoner of war at a Japanese labor camp during World War II who discovers that the man responsible for much of his treatment is still alive and sets out to confront him. It's a powerful depiction of forgiveness, and Colin Firth's performance is outstanding.—*gh*

BOOK REVIEWS

Reality, Grief, Hope: Three Urgent Prophetic Tasks by Walter Brueggemann (Eerdmans, 2014, $15) compares the situation of Israel leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem with the United States today. This short but important book calls for a prophetic response like that in the Old Testament, which presented reality amid ideology, grief amid denial and hope amid despair. We are to follow "the particularizing narrative of the neighborhood" over "the totalizing narrative of the empire," which Brueggemann identifies as a system of "therapeutic, technological, consumerist militarism."—*gh*

Beginning with the Word: Modern Literature and the Question of Belief by Roger Lundin (BakerAcademic, 2014, $24.99) looks at the implications of the Word becoming flesh. Lundin dialogues with imaginative literature and with modern literary and cultural theory. This is not a book for the general reader but includes many insights for those willing to dig for them.—*gh*

(Continued from page 5)

-izing themselves. It creates enmity. It injures the body of Christ. We can do better than that. We need to recognize all our glimpses of truth. We need to integrate them and embrace them. As a Christian denomination, we are called to seek the whole truth of God.—*Brent A. Koehn, Elkhart, Ind.*

Heart aches for Stutzman

The discussion of sexuality throughout our denomination has been less then desirable and my heart aches for our Executive Board and Ervin Stutzman, executive director.

Our community in Berne, Ind., was blessed to have Dr. Christopher Yuan and his parents speak at First Mennonite. I urge those who have never heard them speak to go to YouTube and listen to their story. You will find several to choose from: Christopher's testimony as he spoke at Cedarville (Ohio) University, "A Christian Response to Homosexuality, Nature or Nurture." Or you may wish to purchase the book Christopher and his mother wrote together, *Out of a Far Country* (2011).

My prayer for Mennonite USA is and always has been to be a people filled with the power of our risen Lord and Savior.—*Orlyn Lehman, Berne, Ind.*

Unborn rights

In his May letter, Willard H. Albrecht denies that making abortion illegal solves the abortion problem. I've never understood this attitude. The reason abortion is wrong is that it is a violent, lethal assault on a fellow human being, a form of child abuse and domestic violence and a fatal form of discrimination. Should all laws against murder and assault be taken off the books? If not, why deny protection to the unborn that we grant to others? People who claim that abortion is wrong but refuse to support making it illegal apparently don't really believe that unborn children have rights that everyone is bound to respect.—*Jerry C. Stanaway, Villa Park, Ill.*

A treasure for the church

Thank you for the wonderful cover story on Marcus Smucker (May). Sue Conrad Howes did a fine job with the limited word space available to profile such a prolific life. In addition to what she included, Marcus chaired the now defunct Mennonite Board of Congregational Ministries board of directors for most of the 1990s. As such, he was essentially my boss while I served as MBCM president. What a wonderful mentor for a young leader to have! Blessings, Marcus. You have been a great treasure for the church.—*Everett Thomas, Goshen, Ind.*

Family relationships

Family relationships are dear to us. In our family of children and grandchildren, as we have increased through the years, differences have increased and we don't agree at times. But we remain a group of people with familial ties and gracious consideration for each other.

I think of the church as God's family. We are brothers and sisters in our faith. But the church is not basically a culture-centered group of people or a scientific organization. The church was founded on God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and his Word, the Holy Scriptures. So we accept with thankfulness the 12th chapter of Hebrews that follows the faith chapter, 11. The 12th chapter begins with encouraging us to continue the race of life in Jesus Christ and then tells us how to run and accept God's training. Read all of chapter 12 to the closing verses, Hebrews 12:28-29.—*Julia Penner, Mountain Lake, Minn.*

Absolute values

Read what the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. In verse 13b he writes, "The body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." In verses 18-20, he tells the Corinthians to "flee from sexual immorality." Nowhere does Paul condone them to continue to live a sexually immoral lifestyle.

I am a sinner saved by the grace of God. Yet I do not attempt to continue t live a lifestyle of sin. Jesus said we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. We should love all people no matter their lifestyle, but we should not condone their sinful lifestyle.

Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941) wrote: "Christianity stands for absolut values, and the church falls from grace every time she compromises about them. For the world detests absolute values; they are so inconvenient." My fear for Mennonite Church USA is tha it is allowing the world to change our absolute values as we find them in the Bible.—*Claude Schrock, Grabill, Ind.*

Appreciate May issue

I want to express appreciation for the May issue. I found the articles stimulating and encouraging. Cyneatha Mill saps' Grace and Truth column connected resurrection to the real prison tombs from which many people in our society emerge. John D. Roth's Global Anabaptism column reminds u how the global church can help North American Anabaptists find new life by nurturing "a living tradition, enlivene by local readings of Scripture, strengt ened by the insights of many member enriched by conversations with other Christians, that bears witness to the gospel in a rich variety of cultural forms." I also appreciated his suggestion of apocalypse rather than tragedy as a lens for viewing the current moment in our denominational life.

Relentless love (Sabrina Falls), Spi itual integrity (Marcus Smucker), heal ing through restorative justice (Ted Lewis), reasonable risk (Gordon Houser), challenging disparities (Harvey Yoder) and setting captives free (Exaucee Toffa) have provided a month's worth (and more) of spiritual nourishment.—*Joetta Schlabach, St. Paul, Minn.*

God's footprints in the 'crisis'

The church stands at a door of an opportunity that comes along only once every generation or more. We have the prospect to engage in a broad forum for discussion that will likely shape the church for the next generation. The current crisis, as some speak of the unsettling debate on human sexuality or same-sex issues, is really as much an opportunity as it is a danger. This is particularly true for young adults, who have a profound interest in the subject at hand but seldom have the occasion to make their voice heard in church circles beyond their local congregation. This is a chance to study the Scriptures together and listen for God's voice regarding a vitally important issue.

A few weeks ago, I joined a discussion group that met late one night in a packed dorm room at Goshen (Ind.) College. I came away from that meeting with new hope for the church. Why? Because these two dozen young adults demonstrated their deep care and concern for the church by the very nature of their thoughtful questions. I hope they will participate in a much wider forum for engagement regarding their questions and concerns.

I have heard it said that the Chinese symbol for crisis is a combination of two symbols for "opportunity" and "danger." This may be a fit descriptor for this moment in history in Mennonite Church USA.

First, let me focus on the opportunity. Loren Johns, a professor at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., says: "This crisis has kicked up more interest in—and more intense discussion about—theology, ethics and ecclesiology than I think I have seen in the Mennonite church in my 59 years. Thanks be to God. I continue to think that the theological discussions this crisis has elicited in the church can be a wonderful gift to the church—an almost unparalleled opportunity ... if we are able to approach these discussions with appropriate patience and love."

The "if" in his last sentence identifies one of the dangers we face. At this moment of profound opportunity for young adults to witness the church wrestling deeply with significant issues, some of us may not have the patience or the love to engage respectfully in the churchwide forum for discernment. I am not suggesting that Mennonite Church USA must stay together just as it is now or that it would be unfaithful to God for people to form alternate fellowships. I just hope that people who choose to leave Mennonite Church USA will go about it thoughtfully, with adequate time for spiritual discernment and exploration of unintended consequences.

Frankly, I see God's footprints in and around many of places where people have discussed the current "crisis." For example, I was heartened to observe the way the delegates of Franklin Conference engaged questions about their church affiliation at their delegate assembly on March 31. Franklin is one of the conferences that expressed concerns about the recent action by Mountain States Mennonite Conference to credential a minister who is in a same-sex relationship, so when they met as a conference, they examined "Strengths, Weaknesses and Opportunities" regarding their relationships across Mennonite Church USA. Their deliberations demonstrated careful thought and care for the church, both in its local and its national expressions.

They demonstrated that the current debates present a moment of great opportunity for us:

- to renew our commitment to be God's church in mission;
- to clarify our core biblical, theological and ethical convictions;
- to set our eyes on a vision on the future;
- to clarify our aspirations for tending our common life together;
- to implement the Purposeful Plan for Mennonite Church USA.

I hope many people will engage in respectful conversations in small group settings, congregational gatherings and beyond. I'll do my best to facilitate broader forums for the discussion so that together we may seek to align ourselves with God's purposes in the world. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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Social means more than 'chit chat'

Anna Groff

'Social' refers to providing tools for 'creating, nurturing and fostering community.'

While not new, it remains important for us to acknowledge the way social media impacts our relationships and conversations within the church.

Meredith Gould, a speaker at the Associated Church Press convention April 25-27 in Chicago, outlined four areas of our understanding that digital technology has changed. Gould is a sociologist and digital strategist for churches.

She began by addressing the misconception that "social" in "social media" means "chit chat." In fact, "social" refers to providing tools for "creating, nurturing and fostering community." I will address three of her four points below and their impact within Mennonite Church USA:

1. Time and timing: Expectations surrounding how long a process takes have completely changed, she said. People are aware of news happenings much faster than they used to be, and they expect immediate feedback. She provided the example of the falling popularity of RSVPs. Millennials (those born after 1980) often disregard that practice as they think that by the time they RSVP, the "train has left the station."

I thought of the news that broke in December 2013 regarding Mountain States Mennonite Conference's decision to license pastor Theda Good. I heard some individuals express frustration about the amount of time it took the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board to respond. The EB wanted to wait until its scheduled meeting in February before releasing a response. Prior to social media, I doubt there would have been the same expectation for a response within weeks of hearing this kind of news.

2. Privacy and disclosure: Gould said "transparency" is now another buzzword overused by leaders. It actually means telling the truth and admitting that all information on the web is public, she said. While it is possible to lock down some information online, it is wiser to assume it all is public. I thought of an example within Mennonit Church USA when I called a conference ministe to ask if a letter to the EB from some congregational leaders within his conference was a "publi document." He said he had seen it floating arou over email, so he assumed it was public. I admir this particular leader's realistic and open attitud One can't take back an email after it is sent.

3. Leadership and authority: Finally, Gould said that digital technology is democratizing and flattening hierarchies within the church world. A Mennonites, we may think the hierarchy piece a plies less to us, but the democratizing dynamic surely impacts our life as a church.

For example, at the Constituency Leaders Council meeting March 20-22, Ervin Stutzman, executive director, said the Executive Board hopes to conduct a congregational survey in the coming months to gather fresh data on church member responses to LGBT inclusion.

Digital technology could allow for an extensiv online survey that could potentially reach almos every member of Mennonite Church USA. This exciting. However, a challenge remains: how *bes* to reach the varying parts of the church? For instance, the pro-inclusion part of the church tend to be more digitally savvy and comfortable with online surveys, so the response rate from that group could be higher. The EB will want to hear from as many people as possible—not just those eager to respond online. This could involve mail ing and emailing as well as offering a link to the online survey.

For Mennonite Church USA, democratization due to digital technology is not straightforward even predictable.

As we move forward, let's consider ways to embrace these changes—thanks to digital technology—that Gould calls "irrevocable." At the same time, it would be prudent to consider ways not to leave others behind.—*ag*

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The Mennonite

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July 2014

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Indebted to Marcus Smucker

"I've never seen a congregation so excited to get the latest edition of *The Mennonite*," pastor Keith Zehr said as he held the May issue high. About five years ago, Lowville (N.Y.) Mennonite Church faced some difficult times, he continued. Marcus Smucker (cover story) was able to come and walk with us and provide some insight and guidance during this time.

We at Lowville Mennonite publicly thank Marcus for the work he has done for our congregation and the greater church. We also commend *The Mennonite* for featuring him. Our congregation is better for Marcus' gentle but often firm admonishments about how to relate to one another. Some who worked closely with Marcus knew bits of his personal history. By reading his whole story, we were able to better understand what brought Marcus to the place where he can ably recognize unhealthy systems and so effectively coach congregations back to life-giving communication.

Our congregation is deeply indebted to Marcus for the work he did. But more than that, we developed a deep affection for Marcus and Dottie. We were blessed to have them come back to our rural New York community to visit and vacation even after his work with our congregation had been formally completed.—*Lowville (N.Y.) Mennonite Church*

Are we ignoring materialism?

Harvey Yoder, in writing about the wealth disparity (Opinion, May), highlights the problem in spending so much time focused individually and in Mennonite Church USA on issues like homosexuality. It is so much more comfortable debating the perceived sins of others than to take on the challenge of our collective sin in regard to our materialistic and consumer lifestyles.

The enormity of this problem within Mennonite Church USA churches will require all our attention and a call for God's Spirit to move our hearts to compassion toward the needs in our world. I wonder when this issue will get its turn to take front and center in our church dialogue?—*Deborah Good, Harleysville, Pa.*

Craving stories of creation care

I rushed through Andrew Clouse's article about the Albuquerque Mennonite Church seeking "to live in light of environmental crises" in the May issue. I crave these stories of creation care by my fellow Mennonites. The article notes "the unparalleled environmental crises facing the world today" and notes that participants at a conference on Watershed Discipleship in Albuquerque shared in an experience called "Losing Turtle Island."

I agree completely that the epicenter of a community must be the community's own watershed and that our churches must engage in restorative justice for all those who have been wounded by human development—plant, animal and human alike. In this regard, representatives of my own church—the First Mennonite Church of San Francisco—participated in a rally against climate change on Earth Day, April 19, in San Francisco.

Please continue to inform us of the efforts of Mennonites everywhere to stem the tide of environmental degradation that is upon us. As the article notes, "The need for change in the church and in the world is urgent."
—*Jim Musselman, San Francisco*

Loving or leaving?

Mennonite Church USA appears to be in danger of further fracturing over differing responses to the issue of homosexuality. Laity, pastors, churches and conferences disagree. We hear of threats to break fellowship—like "we are right, they are wrong, so we may leave." What produces such thoughts and expressions—fear, insecurity, individualism, self-righteousness, selfishness, a desire to be faithful?

Our Lord calls and teaches us to love one another. Jesus makes love for one another the signature of genuine discipleship. He teaches us to accept, respect and love each other unconditionally. There is no conditional "out" (like if we are in agreement) to get us off the hook.

So how are these threats to break fellowship or actually leaving the conference or denomination expressions of love? My wife and I have lived and served the church in five different Mennonite communities in the last seven decades. In each community we have observed the "church shoppers" demonstrating "consumer Christianity," moving from congregation to congregation multiple times in a lifetime. Will congregations and conferences that leave the larger body encourage and promote the superficial commitments of the "church shoppers"? Having served as a conference minister for a decade, I know the tremendous pressure laid on leadership to resolve conflicts. Delegates, congregational leaders and pastors want denominational and conference staff to do what they often are not willing to do themselves—the difficult and sweaty work of engaging with and listening to those with whom they disagree.

At the same time, I have seen how people with declared differences have mellowed and modified their views if and when they dared to visit, converse and worship with those on the other side of an issue. Let us love one another.—*Robert Hartzler, Wayland, Iowa*

Grateful for tax article

After reading the "Mennonites Say No to War Taxes" cover story (June), the Lancaster, Pa., chapter of 1040for-peace.org strongly affirms both the message and the messenger. We are grateful not only for the thoughtful, life-affirming witness that the portrayed war-tax resisters provide but also for their courageous actions of not paying for war that go beyond their fervent prayers for peace. We also thank *The Mennonite* for highlighting these pivotal concerns of the church and the world in a timely and careful manner.

Marian Franz, the former Mennonite director of the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund, stressed that "no witness for conscience is ever lost."

She also said: "War taxes kill twice. First, they directly enable war—particularly by paying for weapons. Second, taxes allocated for war represent a distortion of priorities. Money is taken away from the important work of healing and is spent to destroy and kill."

Many of us pay more in federal income taxes that underwrite the government's militarism and war making than we donate to our churches and their institutions. At a time when we are destroying and killing at a faster rate than we are healing people and fixing things, the "Mennonites Say No to War Taxes" article was a welcomed respite. Our hope is that many will come to see tax witness as a way to declare the good news of Jesus in our time.—*Harold A. ("H.A.") Penner, Akron, Pa.*

Thanks to Mark and Martin

In response to the June issue: to the editors, thanks so much for publishing two articles on same-gender relation-

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

Many readers will receive this issue in preparation for July 4. Fittingly, in an article that relates to Independence Day, pastor Ryan Ahlgrim reminds us that "democracy is great, but the church is called to practice something better" (page 17).

We are honored to have leaders Hyacinth and Benjamin Stevens grace our cover this month. Both former counselors at Camp Deerpark, Westbrookville, N.Y., they now cultivate leadership development in their co-pastorate at King of Glory Tabernacle in Bronx, N.Y.

Next year at this time, Mennonites from all over the United States and the world will gather in July for the Mennonite Church USA convention Kansas City, Mo., and the Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Harrisburg, Pa. Although MC USA and MWC planners are hosting two separate gatherings, they have been working together to find ways to collaborate in order to assure that both events are meaningful and well attended. John D. Roth (page 9) reminds us that the MWC assembly will "offer a remarkable opportunity to gather with 7,000-8,000 brothers and sisters from around the world to sing, pray and share together."

We received a lot of encouragement and critique (via email and Facebook) regarding Gordon Houser's article about influential Mennonites in the June issue. Read letters to the editor responding to our project on page 54. Houser also reflects on this in the Mediaculture column in this issue (page 53): "In a conversation, a friend said that 'Mennonites have a lot of trouble talking about power or influence.' We like to pretend it doesn't exist." To see the full list of submissions, go to http://www.themennonite.org/issues/17-6/articles/Influential_Mennonite_submissions.—*Editor*

Vincent Harding, pastor and civil rights activist, dies at 82

NEWTON, Kan.—Vincent Harding, a former Mennonite pastor, African-American historian and long-time civil rights activist, died May 19 in Philadelphia. He was 82.

Harding was co-pastor at Woodlawn Mennonite Church in Chicago from 1958 to 1961.

In 1960, Harding and his wife, Rosemarie Freeney Harding, moved to Atlanta to participate in the Southern Freedom Movement as representatives of the Mennonite Church. They co-founded Mennonite House, an interracial voluntary service center and movement gathering place in Atlanta.

Harding drafted speeches for Martin Luther King Jr., including King's famous anti-Vietnam speech, "A Time to Break Silence."

Harding taught religion and social transformation from 1981 to 2004 at Iliff School of Theology in Denver. He authored numerous books, including *There Is A River* and *Wade in the Water: The Wisdom of the Spirituals*.

Survivors include his second wife, Aljosie Aldrich Harding, daughter Rachel and son Jonathan.—*Gordon Houser*

Brenneman reappointed as Goshen president, names Snyder provost

GOSHEN, Ind.—The Goshen College board of directors and Mennonite Education Agency (MEA) board of directors has reappointed James E. Brenneman as president of Goshen College for a third four-year term.

Brenneman's reappointment begins July 1 and continues through June 30, 2018 and was made at the May 30-31 GC board of directors and the June 2 MEA board of directors' meeting. MEA, located in Elkhart, Ind., is the education agency of Mennonite Church USA.

Brenneman is the college's 16th president and began serving in this role in 2006. GC board member Ken Hochstetler affirmed Brenneman's leadership in helping the college become more culturally diverse and relating with external groups.

Brenneman announced that he is creating a provost/executive vice president position to help run the day-to-day operations of the college while he primarily focuses on external relations. He named Lee Snyder to that position.

She was the eighth president of Bluffton (Ohio) University, where she served from 1996 until retiring on July 31, 2006.—*MEA*

photo provided

Mennonite middle-schoolers do service

Two of 40 students from the Lititz (Pa.) Area Mennonite School spread mulch during a service day on May 1. The students visited the Mennonite Disaster Service headquarters and learned about MDS, then worked on the mulch.—*Dave Siegrist*

Kansas church to close after 108 years

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—On June 8, Burrton (Kan.) Mennonite Church decided to close the church at the end of 2014, after 108 years of ministry in the Burrton community and beyond.

Their small membership was affected by many funerals in the past several years. Given the advanced ages of their active membership, filling leadership roles had become increasingly difficult. The remaining members sensed too much of their reduced giving resources was needed to maintain the building, thus limiting the amount available for mission.

They also realized it would be difficult to support another pastor after current pastor Jim Dunn retires on Dec. 31.—*Western District Conference*

Nancy Roynon new coordinator of Sister-Link Wall Hanging Ministry

ELKHART, Ind.—In May, Nancy Roynon of Archbold, Ohio, assumed the volunteer position of coordinator of the Mennonite Women Sister-Link Wall-Hanging Ministry. She will work from her home in Archbold.

Mennonite Women USA has been participating in a partnership with Mennonite Disaster Service since 2003, providing pieced and quilted wall hangings for homeowners whose homes have been destroyed by natural disasters. The original works of art are presented to homeowners during a house blessing following the completion of their home rebuild.

She takes over for Rebecca Sommers of Goshen, Ind., who began in 2011.—*Mennonite Women USA*

—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

Bluffton senior getting closer look at ministry

BLUFFTON, Ohio—A Bluffton University senior from St. Marys, Ohio, is serving this summer in a Goshen, Ind., church as part of Mennonite Church USA's Ministry Inquiry Program (MIP).

Participating in the program at Yellow Creek Mennonite Church is Shannon Thiebeau, a youth ministry major at Bluffton. Her home church is Zion Lutheran in St. Marys.

The MIP enables students from Mennonite institutions to test their calling and gifts for ministry. Supervised by host pastors, they take on various worship, pastoral care and administrative roles during the summer term, including preaching, leading worship, youth ministry and hospital and home visits. Wes Bontreger is Thiebeau's supervising pastor at Yellow Creek Mennonite.

Each student receives a $2,000 scholarship to be applied toward college tuition, along with a $500 stipend. In addition to the Mennonite institutions and Mennonite Church USA Denominational Ministry, funding sources include host churches and the students' area Mennonite conferences and home churches.—*Bluffton University*

Paul Hunt

MDS in Mississippi

A Mennonite Disaster Service volunteer uses a chain saw to clear downed trees and debris in Winston County, Miss., after it was hit by an EF-4 tornado on April 28. MDS volunteers have contributed over 4,000 volunteer hours since the response began on May 8, completing 80 jobs.—*MDS*

Long-lost etching plate for Martyr volume now at Kauffman Museum

GOSHEN, Ind./NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—The Martyrs Mirror Trust, a collaboration between the Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen, and Kauffman Museum, North Newton, has announced the discovery and purchase of a 17th-century copper plate, etched by Dutch artist Jan Luyken for the 1685 edition of *Martyrs Mirror*.

The recently acquired plate illustrates the martyr story of Jacques d'Auchy, a merchant arrested in 1558 in Harlingen, in what is now the Netherlands, and charged with being an Anabaptist. The plate depicts d'Auchy in jail, bidding farewell to his grieving, pregnant wife with the prison guard and others in the background.

"Luyken's detailed etchings vividly capture the drama of the stories contained in the *Martyrs Mirror*," says John D. Roth, director of the Mennonite Historical Library. "Seeing the actual plates that he created to print those illustrations gives a new appreciation both for his skill and for the stories themselves."

D'Auchy's account, published in the *Martyrs Mirror*, includes his confession of faith and a lengthy transcription of his interrogations. He was killed in his prison cell before the official execution could be carried out.

The d'Auchy plate can be viewed at Kauffman Museum through the end of the year when it will return to the Mennonite Historical Library.—*Bethel College*

Nelson Kilmer Science Scholarship established

HESSTON, Kan.—Longtime Hesston College science faculty and staff member Nelson Kilmer's 46 years of dedicated service to the college is being honored with the establishment of the Nelson Kilmer Science Scholarship by his children Ron Kilmer, Glendale, Ariz., and Krista (Kilmer) Nelson, Shawnee, Kan., and their families. Kilmer retired from his service at Hesston College in May.

Kilmer began his teaching career at Hesston Academy, the college's high school, in 1963, and remained in that role until 1965, when he left to pursue graduate studies.

He returned to teach science and math courses at Hesston College in 1970. Kilmer also served as associate academic dean for seven years and director of finance and chief financial officer for 19 years. He also served as a leader in academic assessment and analysis in recent years and as chair of the science department and chair of the natural science division at various times.—*Hesston College*

First Anabaptist Deaf Ministries leaders retreat

MT. PLEASANT, Pa.—Over the weekend of May 16-18, 36 people from the Eastern and Midwestern United States gathered at Laurelville Mennonite Church Center to worship, fellowship and share faith stories, all in American Sign Language.

Husband and wife team (deaf) Jeff and Jan Hoffer led the group through thoughtful discussion and sharing on the theme of "Faith, Fellowship and Fun."

Participants shared stories of faith and renewed acquaintances. There was much hope and determination to make this an annual event for Deaf people across the Mennonite Church.

A three-member planning committee representing Signs of Life Deaf Fellowship, Staunton, Va.; First Deaf Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.; and Deaf Christian Fellowship, College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., coordinated the event. This "first" event built on the foundation of an earlier annual retreat coordinated in the 1970s and 1980s by the former Mennonite Board of Missions Deaf Ministries office.—*Sheila S. Yoder*

Learning about veterans and myself

Ron Adams is pastor of Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church.

For a little over a year, I have co-facilitated a spirituality group for veterans. My partner is a chaplain from the VA hospital. The group meets monthly at the First Unitarian Society of Madison, Wis.

Typically, there are four to six of us who gather each month. The space is comfortable. Snacks enough to feed a multitude fill a table along one wall. An oil lamp rests on another table in the center of our circle. I light it and sit back to see what happens.

Our intention is to provide a safe space for veterans to explore their spirituality. We define spirituality broadly, to include any connection to the world that provides solace security, and a sense of being at home.

For many veterans, military experience damages their most important relationships, including their relationship with God. That damage can leave some veterans feeling disoriented and alone. Our primary agenda is to think together about what it might look like to repair whatever connection is broken.

Weird as it may be, I now hear Jesus calling me to step over the line and love veterans.

I often wonder what I am doing in that circle. I worry that I have nothing to contribute. My chaplain partner assures me that I belong there with her. I still wonder, but I go. I eat snacks and listen. And I learn, and not only about veterans. I learn about myself.

As a good Mennonite, I am comfortable remaining behind the walls that separate me from those participating in the military. And frankly, it's easier that way, neatly dividing the world into us and them. On my side of the wall are pacifists and the innocent victims of military violence. On the other side are those who contribute to that violence, soldiers included.

Now here I am, sitting in a circle of veterans. They say things that affirm every negative feeling I have about the military. They say things that challenge those feelings. And I am surprised as one stereotype after another is broken open, allowing me to see past my carefully tended walls to the humanity we share. I hear a longing for love, for safety, for communion, for salvation.

It's safe to say that the Pharisees considered Jesus to be a royal pain. They worked hard to maintain the law and the tradition. They believed the future of their people depended upon it.

Then along came this upstart rabbi who blithely crossed every traditional and legal boundary. Jesus ate with anybody. He touched everybody. He turned no one away.

And when his disciples tried to draw some boundaries of their own, Jesus took a child on his lap and revealed something about the kingdom of God. It is, as Jesus described it, a very untidy place. The disciples were constantly surprised by who they met there.

It's amazing what you discover when you follow Jesus over the borderline. It turns out that people are people. We share the same needs and desires and hopes. Trite but true. It turns out that God loves all people. We knew that, right? It turns out that Jesus calls us to love all people. Now the argument starts.

What do we mean by "love"? By "all people"? Don't people have to change their ways before entering into God's reign? Look at how they live and what they've done. And off we go. Brick by brick, building another wall. Protecting ourselves or the tradition or the community by naming someone as beyond the call to love.

I am still a convinced Mennonite pacifist. I remain opposed to violence, whether committed by individuals or blessed by the state. I still believe that war is sin. My convictions are intact.

But none of that excuses me from loving others, including military veterans. Neither the strength of my convictions nor the rightness of my theology can overcome the call to love everyone Jesus loves. Weird as it may be, I now hear Jesus calling me to step over the line and love veterans.

When you look over the borderline, who do you see? Only you can say. But I can tell you this. Jesus is right there with them. And he's calling you to come on across. TM

Prepare to be hosts for MWC in 2015

Eight years ago, when Jonathan Stucky and a small group of women from the Teusaquillo Mennonite congregation in Bogotá, Colombia, began bringing food every Sunday afternoon to the small neighborhood of San Nicolás at the edge of the city, their efforts seemed hopelessly insignificant. Nearly half of Colombia's 46 million inhabitants live on approximately $8 per day, and 15 percent survive on less than $2 per day. Years of violence in the countryside have uprooted millions of families from their homes, with hundreds of displaced people showing up in Bogotá every day. The rapidly-growing San Nicolás neighborhood has one school for its 5,000 inhabitants but no clinic, no police station and few basic services. Yet Sunday after Sunday, Jonathan made the trip across town with a van laden with sandwiches.

Slowly the Sunday afternoon meal project evolved into the Comedor Pan y Vida (Bread and Life Cafeteria), a small community center that now provides regular meals, a bilingual after-school program, workshops for adults and a safe refuge for abused women. Five years ago, a small congregation—La Iglesia Menonita de la Resurrección—emerged, and it has become a spiritual oasis in the San Nicolás community. The secret to the program's success, says Adaía Bernal, an energetic leader in the congregation, is patience and love.

"In a setting where there is so much darkness," she explained recently to a delegation of Mennonite World Conference (MWC) visitors, "we are lighting candles by letting the world see that we love each other."

Our group of international visitors quickly experienced that love. As we crowded into a small room, our hosts—including many children and young people—opened our time together by raising their hands and offering us a blessing. In the hours that followed we were moved as together we worshiped and sang, heard testimonies of transformed lives and joined in prayer. At the end of our visit, members of the congregation prepared a simple meal for us, sharing generously from their meager resources.

Next year at this time, thousands of Mennonite brothers and sisters from around the world—among them, several members of the Iglesia Menonita de la Resurrección in San Nicolás, Colombia—will travel to Harrisburg, Pa., to participate in the 16th Assembly of MWC. At that gathering we will have a unique opportunity to host members of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite church. Even though the date seems far away, it's not too early to think about your role as a host.

Here are a few suggestions that came to mind as I was visiting the Comedor Pan y Vida in San Nicolás:

1. Register to attend Pennsylvania 2015: Our understanding of church places a high value on face-to-face relationships. If you wonder what it means to be part of a global family, the upcoming MWC assembly (July 21-26, 2015) will offer a remarkable opportunity to gather with 7,000-8,000 brothers and sisters from around the world to sing, pray and share together. You may not develop a personal relationship with each participant, but you will return home with a host of new friends and a deeper appreciation for God's work in the world.

2. Reach out to sister churches in other countries: Most Mennonite congregations in the United States have developed special relationships with individuals or congregations in other parts of the world. Building on these relationships, extend a personal invitation for your partners to attend Assembly 16 and offer financial assistance to help make that visit possible. Write a letter of invitation that may prove helpful in the visa application process. Look on our global gathering as an opportunity to deepen these existing friendships.

3. Contribute your 'fair share': In comparison with the global organizations of other denominations, the administrative costs of MWC are miniscule. But there are still costs. And hosting a global assembly will bring more costs. Currently, the "fair share" portion that MWC requests from its supporting churches amounts to the cost of one meal per member per year. That's right—one meal per year. We know our congregations are already supporting many good causes. But if you believe that Mennonite World Conference serves a worthy purpose, please encourage your congregation to include this ministry in your annual budget for at least the amount of one meal per member.

Last month, the tiny congregation of Iglesia Menonita de la Resurrección served MWC representatives a meal. They have paid their "fair share."

Let's respond by doing the same. TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

The upcoming MWC assembly (July 21-26, 2015) will offer a remarkable opportunity to gather with brothers and sisters from around the world.

An Evangelical case against alcohol

Magazines like to publish articles that present something in a different light. So when *Christianity Today*, the flagship evangelical periodical, published its June issue with these words on the cover: "The Case for an Alcohol-Free Life," the underlying assumption was that most evangelicals use alcohol. Or at least a significant enough number of them do to make being alcohol-free new and different. Times have changed.

The writer of the article, called "Why I Gave Up Alcohol," is D.L. Mayfield, a 30-year-old Evangelical woman who with her family serves with InnerCHANGE, a Christian order among the poor.

She grew up in a pastor's home where alcohol was a nonissue. As a young adult, she became "an occasional drinker, a social imbiber, free to live my life in a way that glorifies God."

Then she and her husband joined a Christian order among the poor. "Our first shock when we moved into our low-income apartment in a Midwestern inner city," she writes, "was the amount of substance abuse that surrounded us." She describes the abuse in detail.

Spiritual discipline: After a year of living there, she writes, "I gradually just … stopped. I dreaded going to the liquor store, imagining the faces I would see there." Eventually she realized she could abstain from alcohol entirely, and this became a spiritual discipline for her.

Mayfield goes on to reflect on Christians of previous centuries who stood against alcohol's effects. "Temperance movements," she writes, "often founded and organized by women, were a direct reaction to the perceived social evils of alcohol in the 1800s and 1900s."

In the 19th century, alcohol was tied to spouse and child abuse, and women had little to no rights in regard to property and possession. Thus women, especially Christian women, writes Mayfield, "started to organize and lobby against alcohol, starting from within their homes and gradually moving into the political sphere." The temperance movement, while focusing on alcohol, became associated with women's rights, including suffrage.

Mayfield sees that movement as a model for us today. She writes: "Just as we currently have no problem denouncing slavery, prostitution and, to a lesser extent, gambling—all for the ways they harm persons and communities—we'd be wise to reconsider the valid and pressing reasons why so many Christians before us chose to give up alcohol completely."

Clearly, she is providing a different reason for giving up alcohol than was used in previous decades for Evangelicals, to be unstained by the sin of the world. She notes that many Christians view drinking as a rite of passage out of "the perceived fundamentalism of our past."

She sees young people and women in particular embracing alcohol as a sign of liberation. And many of her peers celebrate drinking. She wonders, "Isn't anyone friends with alcoholics?"

Given that about 1 in 6 Americans has a drinking problem (defined as excessive drinking or alcoholism), they probably do know someone who has a drinking problem.

Evils of the world: Mayfield's argument is less about purity than about justice. "I didn't give up alcohol because I wanted to flee the evils of the world," she writes. "I gave up alcohol as a way of engaging the evils of the world."

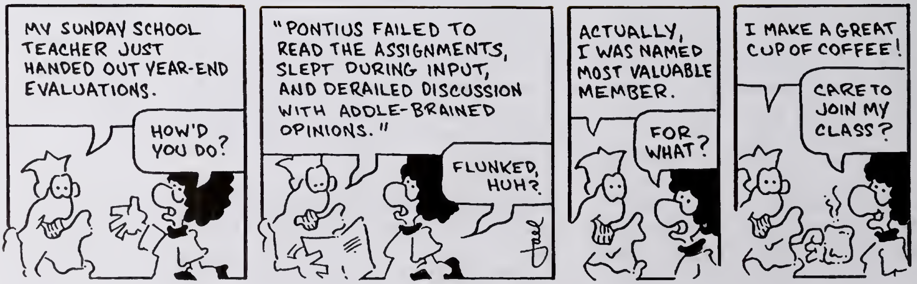
Who we relate to affects our perspective on this issue, Mayfield writes. She has been changed by her neighborhood.

"I am not calling on everyone to become teetotalers," she writes. "But I am asking us to consider temperance as a valid and thoughtful option."

Echoing the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 8, she says we are free not to drink because of our relationships with those who struggle, when "love tempers our actions."—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


MY SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER JUST HANDED OUT YEAR-END EVALUATIONS.
HOW'D YOU DO?
"PONTIUS FAILED TO READ THE ASSIGNMENTS, SLEPT DURING INPUT, AND DERAILED DISCUSSION WITH ADDLE-BRAINED OPINIONS."
FLUNKED, HUH?
Joel
ACTUALLY, I WAS NAMED MOST VALUABLE MEMBER.
FOR WHAT?
I MAKE A GREAT CUP OF COFFEE!
CARE TO JOIN MY CLASS?

© Pontius.com

—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “I don’t understand the state of mind that makes people at ease with the idea that gun laws are being relaxed to the point that makes it overwhelmingly likely that homicidal people will have possession of these military weapons.”—Marilynne Robinson

The goodness of law

If you want to feed the hungry, reduce poverty, make peace and save the environment, an important wrench in the do-good toolbox is a robust legal system, justly enforced, says Lowell Ewert, director of peace and conflict studies at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo, Ontario, in Canadian Mennonite.

He cites economist Amartya Sen, a Nobel laureate, who contends that there has never been a famine in a country where basic civil and political rights are respected. The reason? Because the ability of citizens to participate in the political process and hold their leaders accountable provides a policy foundation that makes famine less likely.

So also with protecting the environment, which becomes easier when a free and independent press informs the public about environmental risks, and these informed people have the right to work for change without risking their lives.—*The Marketplace*

88%

Americans who say their household owns a Bible

82%

Americans who consider themselves knowledgeable about the Bible

43%

Americans who can name the first five books of the Bible.

—*American Bible Society*

Creative or unruly?

University of California, Riverside, psychologist Tuppett Yates led a study in which 171 preschoolers were observed during “pretend play” sessions in which they interacted with stuffed animals and other toys. Three months later, the kids were evaluated by their teachers. “Black children with imaginative and expressive pretend-play skills were evaluated negatively, whereas nonblack children with similar play skills were evaluated positively,” she reports in the journal *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*. The 93 teachers doing the evaluating were overwhelmingly either white or Hispanic, and it appears they unwittingly interpreted benign behaviors by black kids as problematic.—*Pacific Standard*

Leading cause of death

The leading cause of death for African-American women ages 15 to 45 is murder at the hands of a partner.—*Christianity Today*

Violence in God’s name a corruption

The International Theological Commission has published a new document clarifying that Christian belief is not only inherently incompatible with the incitement to violence but that calls for violence are the religion’s greatest corruption.

The new document, published so far only in Italian on Jan. 16, will be made available in other languages. The title is “God, the Trinity and the Unity of Humanity: Christian Monotheism and its Opposition to Violence.” It is the fruit of a five-year study by the commission.—*Bridgefolk*

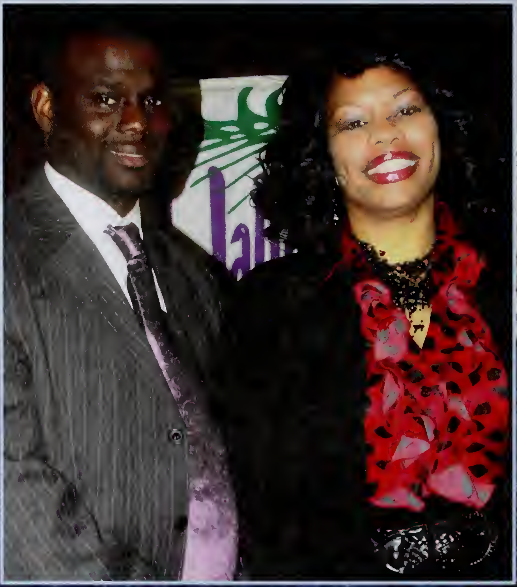
Numbers to ponder

- Percentage of all U.S. criminal defendants who forgo a trial by pleading guilty: **97**
- Percentage of U.S. convicts exonerated last year who had previously pleaded guilty without a trial: **17**
- Portion of U.S. jobs held by humans today that are at high risk of being automated by 2024: **½**
- Factor by which black applicants for New Jersey hurricane-relief funds are more likely to be rejected than white applicants: **2.5**
- Number of deaths in traffic accidents for every 100,000 vehicles on the road in developed nations: **11**
- In Ethiopia: **3,865**
- Percentage of divorced low-income men who say they wish they had stayed married: **53**
- Of divorced low-income women who do: **19**
- Percentage of single people who say they cannot define a “date”: **69**
- Percentage of all litter on U.S. roadways accounted for by cigarette butts: **36**
- Estimated additional hours Americans would spend stoned annually if marijuana were legal in most states: **30 billion**
- Percentage change since 2000 in the average cost of food worldwide: **+123**
- Percentage of U.S. married men who say their spouses vote the same way they do: **73**
- Of U.S. married women who say so: **49**
- Percentage of e-cigarette nicotine-poisoning cases in Oklahoma this year that have involved children under 6: **87**—*Harper’s*

Growing in God

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Several decades ago in the Bronx, a borough of New York City, says Hyacinth (Banks) Stevens, God was shaping her heart. She was becoming a youngster who shared Jesus in the inner-city streets near her congregation, the former Burnside Mennonite Church. At the same time in the neighboring borough of Manhattan, says Benjamin Stevens, God was shaping his heart as well. He was developing into a youngster who grew in his walk with God and was baptized at the former Seventh Avenue Mennonite Church.



Benjamin and Hyacinth Stevens. Photo provid

Hyacinth and Benjamin Stevens are helping guide new generations in New York City.

Their hearts for God intersected when they became adolescent campers at Camp Deerpark, a ministry of the New York City Council of Mennonite Churches in upstate New York. After meeting as campers when they were 12, they later served together as teenagers and young adults for a decade. In 1998, their friendship blossomed into courtship, and they married in 1999. Today Benjamin and Hyacinth Stevens are co-pastors of King of Glory Tabernacle (formerly Burnside) and parents of four children, ages 4 through 13.

The 40-year-olds have transitioned from being children of the city's leaders to leaders of the city's children. Today they are helping lead the next generations of urban Mennonites as they apply in adulthood what formed them earlier, they said during an April telephone interview.

Hyacinth was influenced by an intentional Christian community led by her parents, Michael and Addie Banks, longtime Mennonite leaders in the city. "There was lots of crime and negativity in our neighborhood, and I was perplexed with questions about this," she said. "But my Christian community taught me to not look through eyes of desperation and hopelessness but through eyes of hope for peace, reconciliation and change."

She grew up in a Christ-centered, process-oriented community. "If something was going on socially, politically and spiritually, we sat around the dinner table to talk and pray about it," she said. "We had Bible studies, community building sessions and worship that focused on the empowerment of God for positive renewal. My father was instrumental in helping us take our peace witness to the streets."

As a result of those prayer walks, the sections of heavy drug activity in the nearby city blocks began to shrink some. "It did not change overnight, but it did change," she said. "These blocks had heavy gang violence and drug activity. We bathed this area in an invisible circle of prayer and created outreaches for youth, such as a baseball team."

At this same time, Benjamin was growing up at Seventh Avenue, now Infinity Mennonite Church. It's where as a young child he attended Head Start, a program sponsored for small children in the church. His strong values today regarding the importance of family, church family and positive nurturance were shaped by the close proximity of the church family with his family, he said. For example, a couple of his teachers were friends with his mother and grandmother, who lived across the street from the church.

"Everyone who knew my grandmother knew my brothers and sisters and me," he said. "I was surrounded on all sides by my church family and my biological family, and there was always someone watching out for me and giving me some type of guidance. There was a huge circle of connection of love that helped ground me and shaped my development. That plays a big a part in my having something to pass on to others today."

But my Christian community taught me to not look through eyes of desperation and hopelessness but through eyes of hope for peace, reconciliation and change.—Hyacinth Stevens

Growing together at Camp Deerpark

This circle of security gave Benjamin the confidence to branch out to Camp Deerpark, an important stepping stone into pastoral leadership, he said. Camp is where he and Hyacinth were mentored by Ken Bontrager, the camp's longtime executive director. For a couple of decades, he's shaped the camp into a conduit for developing new leaders in the city. That required taking risks, he said during a February interview.

"I was questioned about the amount of responsibility I gave these young people," Bontrager

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Youth from King of Glory Tabernacle play at Camp Deerpark. Photo provided

Benjamin Stevens, co-pastor of King of Glory Tabernacle in the Bronx, serves at Camp Deerpark in upstate New York.
Photo provided

said. "But I felt strongly that unless we allowed them to sink or swim, they would never discover what they could really do. If we wanted to have strong leaders, we needed to let them practice here. It was amazing how when we gave more than they could handle, they stepped up to the plate."

Benjamin and Hyacinth stepped up to the plate. They began as assistant cabin counselors and later became head counselors. Benjamin later led Bible studies and activities and painted a mural on a 12-foot wall for the challenge trail. At 17, Hyacinth was summer drama instructor—a job normally given to young adults in their mid-20s. She also served as a discipleship leader, summer program director and year-round program director. Today she is on the camp's board, and she and Benjamin serve as camp pastors and do staff training.

God simply asked that I be who he created me to be and that he would do the rest.—Benjamin Stevens

"Camp is where God called me into leadership long before I knew what the word really meant," Hyacinth said. "The many opportunities molded me, gave me experience in and exposure to ministry and freedom for trial and error. If I didn't get it right the first time, it became a teachable moment. Ken created a guided space where he and others could speak into our journeys and influence us in learning to respond to God's grace and to desire and practice deeper discipleship."

Benjamin said he was constantly pushed at camp to do things he felt beyond him. "The first time I was asked to do Bible classes, I hesitated," he said. "But I was told there was not a perfect formula for doing things. God simply asked that I be who he created me to be and that he would do the rest."

Camp's formation helps couple form others

Today they continue to value and practice leadership development in their co-pastorate—begun in 2008—at King of Glory, a congregation with 80 members, many of them African-American. The co-pastors encourage camp participation and sponsor mentoring programs for children, young people and young adults that include life-skills development, spiritual formation and service opportunities.

"It's important to us to give back all we've been given," Hyacinth said. "Having so many opportunities to develop new leaders keeps us committed to serving as pastors in the city despite the challenges. Part of that is encouraging camp attendance with our families—even with families who are not regular attenders at church."

When kids come home from camp, they flounder in connecting their positive spiritual experience in the mountainous pastoral setting with the day-to-day urban grind. "We emphasize the importance of being missionaries right in their own back yard—either going back to camp to work or serving in the city," she said. "We help them see that serving at camp and church is just as much a part of doing missions as is going overseas."

Benjamin and Hyacinth also strive to help campers move on to become camp counselors. That helps supply camp with qualified staff members who are members of the urban churches. "These counselors come back to continue the relationship with the campers through social media and in one-on-one relationships," Hyacinth said. "They become ongoing ambassadors, bridges and role models."

Benjamin believes young people are more likely to remain in the church when they engage in ministry, such as helping out with Sunday school or the worship team and have one-on-one mentors. "None of this is instant," he said. "It depends on building the relationship over time."

The couple is challenged in juggling the mentoring of young people with parenting their growing family, they said. "Our commitment to leadership development begins at home," Benjamin said. "It's a balancing act, giving as much attention to our own children as we give the church. We try not just to bring them to church because we are here but to help them find their own joy in coming, serving and building relationships."

Hyacinth said, "I am really grateful for the modeling of my own parents. They taught me about the Bible and about Jesus and their own convictions, but then they let me do my own faith journey. They introduced me to Christianity but emphasized that it was my personal relationship to Christ. It was not about rules but about relationship. I want to convey this to our children. "

Mentors seek mentoring

To replenish their energies after mentoring their congregation and their family, Benjamin and Hyacinth seek ongoing support from fellow leaders in the New York City Council of Mennonite Churches. It consists of 18 congregations (African-American, Latino, Anglo, Garifuna or a mixture) that belong to Lancaster Mennonite Conference (LMC) or Atlantic Coast Conference. Two of those leaders are Sylvia Shirk, who has served as pastor of Manhattan (N.Y.) Mennonite Fellowship for eight years, and Monroe Yoder, who is bishop emeritus for LMC and in 2015 will have provided 50 years of leadership in the city.

"Benjamin and Hyacinth are no longer the youngsters they once were," said Shirk in an April telephone interview. "Longstanding leaders in the city remember them when they were kids at camp. But now they are fully functioning adults who are raising four children while serving in an important ministry. They are grownups doing some really good work." ▶

Benjamin believes young people are more likely to remain in the church when they engage in ministry and have one-on-one mentors.

Benjamin and Hyacinth Stevens, copastors of King of Glory Tabernacle in the Bronx, baptize one of the young people they mentored. Photo provided

As one of Hyacinth's mentors, Shirk has a front-row seat to the flowering of her leadership. For example, Shirk served as a reference for Hyacinth in the interviewing process with Mennonite Central Committee. MCC recently hired her as the part-time NYC program coordinator.

"Hyacinth has built up a lot of credibility with her work with Camp Deerpark and with mentoring young people at King of Glory," Shirk said. "Some of those young people have gone to do some amazing things. She is also serving on the boards of Camp Deerpark and Mennonite Women USA. She is branching out from the city into a wider sphere of ministry."

> At times we step differently, but we try to step together. It has taken time to learn the different approaches we've brought to ministry.
> —Hyacinth Stevens

Yoder has served as a longtime mentor for Benjamin. The retired bishop knew him as a little boy and became part of his faith development as a teenager and young adult. Yoder serves with Benjamin on the New York City Council of Mennonite Churches, for which Benjamin became moderator in June.

"He was very active with the youth group and sang with the youth choir and was very faithful and dedicated," says Yoder, who at one time was Seventh Avenue's pastor. "I remember how when Benjamin said he'd be there at a certain time, he was there. He was always zealous to learn, and he developed his own opinions and convictions rather readily and easily and was always ready to defend them."

Those same qualities are operating today. "Benjamin does his own thinking and calls us to task sometimes when we need it," Yoder says. "When he wants to make a point, he does it graciously. I see him as a real budding church statesman. I once knew him as a little kid, and now he is a mature, brother gentleman. He is also a good, sensitive father who knows his children."

When Yoder preached at Benjamin and Hyacinth's installation service a couple of years ago at King of Glory, he felt like he was passing the baton of spiritual leadership to the next generation. "I am so confident we are handing leadership into capable hands that will carry and protect it well," he said. "Because I see the dedication and capability of these younger leaders, and their desire to allow the grace of God to work within them and to mold and shape them, I can sleep peacefully at night."

The dance of God

It is this "dance" of cooperating with God's grace that continually renews the couple's love for God, for each other and for their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, they said. Hand in hand, they are facing the urban challenges along with others in their generation, including Moises Angustia, youth pastor at United Revival Mennonite Church, a Spanish congregation in neighboring Brooklyn. He and the couple have mentored some young adults who are becoming the latest crop of new leaders.

"In the last four years, leadership in some pockets of New York City has been undoing a shift, as new leaders emerge," Hyacinth said. "All that focus on leadership training by Ken and my father has cycled back around. The seedlings that were planted are now maturing."

When God planted the tender seedlings of faith in Benjamin and Hyacinth, they did not yet know that they would eventually partner together with God in the tough call of urban mission. This partnership of grace is the glue that holds them together and keeps them moving together.

"It's like a dance," Hyacinth said. "At times we step differently, but we try to step together. It has taken time to learn the different approaches we've brought to ministry. But we're finding our balance, as we respect and value each other and our different gifts and strengths. We are allowing ourselves to submit to each other."

Benjamin said, "I have learned it is a dance in which sometimes I take the lead and Hyacinth follows, and then other times, she takes the lead and I follow. What keeps me serving in the city is being able to do all this with Hyacinth. It can be very tiring, and there are times I just want to lay down. But I get up and keep going, because I have a wonderful wife to do all this with."

Laurie Oswald Robinson is a free-lance writer in Newton, Kan., and the author of Forever Family.

Democracy and the way of Jesus

Democracy is great, but the church is called to practice something better.

by Ryan Ahlgrim

In many American churches, the Sunday closest to July 4 is a patriotic service. The national anthem or another patriotic hymn is sung while the American flag is marched down the center aisle. Many churches do this, or something similar, because they believe democracy is the form of government God specially favors. Democracy is a kind of kingdom of God on earth, and the United States has been chosen by God for spreading democracy everywhere. ▶

Those in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition tend to be skeptical of this view. We do not identify any national government with the kingdom of God, so our allegiance to national governments has careful parameters. Most of our congregations do not sing patriotic hymns during worship services or display the American flag in the sanctuary.

But Mennonites are sometimes too dismissive of our government, so let me take a moment to defend democracy.

What form of government does God want people to live under? This question is embedded in Israel's sacred story, and part of that story goes like this:

God used Moses to lead the Israelites out of slavery and bring them to Mount Sinai, where God gave them a set of laws. These laws formed the basis for a new government. That government was a theocracy. In other words, religion ran the government, and the laws were based on loyalty to the God of Israel.

The Israelites did not give their allegiance to a king but—ideally—to God alone.

Most nations at that time were theocracies; but one aspect of Israel's theocracy made it unique: It did not have a king. The Israelites did not give their allegiance to a king but—ideally—to God alone. There was no central government, only a loose confederation of tribes. Leadership was in the hands of local elders, priests, prophets and—in the case of war—judges.

How well did this form of government work out? According to the Book of Judges, not very well. Because there was no centralized authority or standing army, Israel was constantly vulnerable to attack and domination by other nations. Various judges had success in battle, trusting in God's intervention, but the victories were local and temporary. Envy, competition and violence among the tribes and between towns were frequent. Women and the vulnerable suffered horribly. Leadership was often corrupt or deeply flawed. The Book of Judges paints a picture of existence that was nasty, brutish and short.

After a couple of hundred years of decentralized, local leadership, the tribes of Israel said, "Enough" and demanded a king. The prophet Samuel tried to warn them of the consequences:

"These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen, and to run before his chariots; and he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his courtiers. He will take your male and female slaves, and the best of your cattle and donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take one-10th of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the LORD will not answer you in that day" (1 Samuel 8:11-18).

In other words, having a king with centralized power will result in a military-industrial complex, a draft, loss of freedoms, heavy taxation and confiscation. Nevertheless, this looked a lot better than their current circumstances, so the Israelites proceeded to create a monarchy: a king with centralized power that would be passed on to the eldest legitimate son.

How well did this form of government work out? According to Israel's sacred story, not very well. Saul, the first king, turned out to be mentally ill. David, the next king, was highly effective, but he abused his power to commit adultery and murder, and his eldest son led a civil war against him. Solomon, the next king, attained the throne by murdering the competition. He brought wealth into Israel but at the cost of the importation of foreign gods and the implementation of oppressive labor. His reign was so controversial that, after his son Solomon's death, the nation split into two—the north and the south—each with its own monarchy. The two lines of kings were generally worse than the ones who came before them. Eventually both kingdoms were destroyed by invading empires, their kings assassinated or imprisoned and their sons murdered.

But around the time Israel collapsed and became a dream, far away in Greece, in the city of Athens, people were creating a new form of government called democracy. Citizens voted for their leaders, and leaders served limited terms. The system was not ideal: women, slaves and lower classes could not vote. Nevertheless, democracy was a revolutionary idea.

Which form of national government would you prefer to live under today: a decentralized theocracy, a monarchy or a democracy? Despite its never making an appearance in the Bible, I would choose democracy. Nowhere in the Bible do people vote or leaders serve for designated terms. Even Jesus never promoted democracy. Jesus never asked his disciples, "Raise your hands if you think we should go to Capernaum" or, "Who is in favor of Judas being our treasurer?" Despite the lack of democracy in the Bible, it is a better form of national government than any that we see in the Bible.

This does not mean democracy is ideal; in fact, it also has serious drawbacks. Let's look at some of the defects of American-style democracy. Money has tremendous influence over elections and legislation. Those with the most money can hire the most lobbyists, afford the most lawyers, file the most lawsuits, pull the most strings, fund the most candidates and block or support the most legislation. The super-rich can fund their own campaigns or set up their children in politics, creating a political aristocracy. American democracy is dominated by a wealthy elite.

Another problem with democracy is that the majority rules. This certainly sounds like a fair principle, but it means the minority gets shut out. In American democracy we have a winner-takes-all approach. If a candidate wins an election by the slimmest percentile, he or she wins everything, and the other candidate—who received almost the same number of votes—gets nothing. So the majority has the power to impose its will on even a sizable minority.

Democracy is also often unstable. This is not so much true in the United States as it is in many other countries. Democracy sometimes leads to more crime and more social instability. Consider Russia, which in the 1990s became a democracy. High unemployment, organized crime and other social problems have caused the country to move toward a dictatorship. Consider Egypt, which recently became a democracy, where mass protests and a financial crisis led the military to depose the elected president. Consider Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan—all democracies and all highly dysfunctional.

Winston Churchill said the best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter. He also said democracy is the worst form of government—except for all the other forms that have been tried. I tend to agree with him.

Despite the lack of democracy in the Bible, it is a better form of national government than any that we see in the Bible.

The Bible never came up with the idea of democracy, but it did come up with two concepts that are essential for good government. The first concept is this: Good government must protect the vulnerable. Leviticus 19 provides a sampling of laws reflecting this concern:

"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not

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strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the LORD your God. …

“You shall not defraud your neighbor; you shall not steal; and you shall not keep for yourself the wages of a laborer until morning. You shall not revile the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind; you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

“You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great: with justice you shall judge your neighbor. …

“”You shall rise before the aged, and defer to the old; and you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.

“When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19:9-10, 13-15, 32-34).

This is not how Jesus wants his disciples to operate. Instead of leading from the top, they are to lead from the bottom. Leaders are servants.

The United States has, in some ways, incorporated this concept of protecting the vulnerable in the Bill of Rights. The Constitution, as originally written, did not have the Bill of Rights, but James Madison pushed for its inclusion because without something like a Bill of Rights democracy can be just as oppressive as any other form of government.

The second concept essential for good government comes from Jesus:

“The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:25b-27).

Jesus is saying that in pagan national governments, power is centralized; the ruler imposes his or her rule through coercion and the threat of force. The resources of the nation are also centralized, and the ruler can divvy out those resources to whomever he or she wishes and is praised for doing so.

But this is not how Jesus wants his disciples to operate. Instead of leading from the top, they are to lead from the bottom. Leaders are servants. They do not have coercive power, privileges or perks. They do not hand out benefits from a position of superiority. Instead, leaders simply serve and do what is best for others.

I do not know whether it is possible for a national government to operate like that, but it is how the government of Jesus’ disciples—the church—is supposed to be run.

Most American churches have borrowed the concepts of democracy. We often vote for our leaders and chairpersons and make decisions with a show of hands. But many churches have gone beyond democracy to something closer to the way of Jesus. Instead of holding elections in which two candidates vie for a church position, fostering a system of winners and losers, many churches have a system of congregational discernment resulting in a slate of recommended leaders, all of whom are affirmed together by the congregation. Instead of majority-rule votes, which inevitably cause consternation for the minority, many congregations do not move ahead with a decision until they have reached a consensus. In churches that are seeking to follow Jesus’ way, leaders are not given special privileges or prestige; instead, all are treated as equals, and leaders serve for the purpose of benefiting the congregation, not themselves. Jesus tells us this is our form of government.

I am glad the United States is a democracy, and I am glad I live in the United States. But it is not the kingdom of God. As a Christian I call on the government to live up to its Bill of Rights and to do an ever-better job of protecting the vulnerable. As a Christian I call on the government to use as little violence and coercion as possible, and I suggest that the best way to lead is to serve others. But as a Christian I call on the church—not the United States—to truly be God’s government in this world.

Ryan Ahlgrim is pastor of First Mennonite Church in Indianapolis.

MCC school kit bags, birthdays and Leona Dirks Loepp

A visit with a church matriarch of service and Christian love.

by Raylene Hinz-Penner

Our granddaughters Esther and Emmeline are 5 and 3 years old, respectively. For the past two years we have celebrated their July birthdays at their neighborhood park along with their little friends and parents.

Children and adults at a birthday party in Topeka, Kan., where they fill Mennonite Central Committee school kit bags sewn by Leona Dirks Loepp. Photo provided

Pink Sherbet Photography/creativecommons.org

Children and adults at a birthday party in Topeka, Kan., where they fill Mennonite Central Committee school kit bags sewn by Leona Dirks Loepp. Photo provided

The children dress for water play in a little water feature that runs through the park in Topeka, Kan., try out the park's playground equipment, laugh loudly at their parents' version of the birthday piñata—throwing water balloons at established targets, including their father, eat off the grill their father fires up, and finish with a great birthday cake designed and decorated by their mother. We usually provide the watermelon.

After we have eaten, the girls' mother brings out the bright, colorful, Mennonite Central Committee fabric bags—so much better than the wrapping paper that stuffs our landfills. The children line up beside the boxes where they've placed their pencils, tablets, erasers and other MCC-prescribed school supplies purchased for the birthday party. Each with a colorful fabric bag open to claim its contents, and helped by adults to fill a bag with the right numbers of pencils and other items, the children stuff the bags, which then become school kits for other children.

I turn 65 this year, and my favorite Sunday school and Bible school teacher is 100.

I help Emmeline, who seems proud to accomplish the task herself this year alongside her older sister. It is becoming a wonderful birthday tradition, this little parade. As I watch the girls' mother loading the 34 school kits the children had made, I wonder, Who makes all those fabric bags?

Almost providentially, a friend who also grew up in the Oklahoma Panhandle at Turpin Mennonite Church, soon contacted me to see if I might want to interview Leona (Dirks) Loepp about the hundreds of fabric bags she has made for MCC school kits in her lifetime, reminding me that Leona turns 100 in 2014.

Leona memories flooded over me. I turn 65 this year, and my favorite Sunday school and Bible school teacher is 100. I remember when I was an exchange professor in Chengdu, Sichuan Province in China, with MCC-related China Educational Exchange in 1984-85. Leona's instruction on China's people and Mennonite missions in China came back to me.

I still see our little class of 10-year-olds in Bible school gathered around the globe, with Leona poring over the continents, tracing a finger from China round to the United States, then examining a larger map of China's huge land mass and, finally, Leona's careful instruction about Chinese ways and Mennonite missions. It was better geography instruction than I ever remember receiving in school.

Many years later, Leona told me that after she first taught school with a provisional certificate immediately after graduating from high school during the terrible Dust Bowl years in the Oklahoma Panhandle, she had so wanted to finish college and be properly certified for teaching, but she married, they bought a farm, she raised her sons and time moved on.

I believe she poured that need to teach into us, the children she nurtured at Turpin Mennonite Church. She is still teaching all of us as the church matriarch and model of service and Christian love. And so, I went home to see Leona last year at her home, Emeritus at Liberal Springs in Liberal, Kan. Tiny and spry as ever, still filled with energy, thoughtfulness and caring for others, Leona was downstairs in the foyer to greet me lest I get lost climbing all those stairs to find her apartment.

Leona began sewing the fabric bags for MCC school kits as part of her role with the Women's Missionary group at Turpin Mennonite Church more than 50 years ago. The women's group purchased the cotton fabric that Leona and her friend Luella Schmidt used to sew the school kit bags in those early years. She thinks the cotton seemed

Pink Sherbet Photography/creativecommons.org

In her 90s, she pieced six quilts from school bag scraps after doing four more for her grandchildren in 2011 and 2012.

heavier when she began than it is today. Now, because Leona no longer drives, other women buy the fabric for her.

"Do you want to see them?" Of course. She pulls from beneath her bed a box and counts out 21 completed bags, stacked neatly into the box of bags still in process. Then she gestures toward the boxes stacked under her desk in the corner of her bedroom. She figures there are two or three times as many completed bags in the stacked boxes waiting to go to MCC. When I ask her to estimate the number of bags she makes in a year, she shrugs. "Oh, maybe one or two hundred." I'm sure that estimate is low. Even so, if she has sewn 200 bags each year for 50 years, that is a sizable number.

"How are your eyes, Leona?" She acknowledges that at age 99, they are growing weaker. She can't thread the needle on her machine any longer, and her neighbor down the hall helps as Leona needs her. Then she chuckles. In 2010 she decided to piece a quilt, "just a simple nine-block quilt" with the scrap material left from all those school bags. A friend machine-quilted it for her, and she liked the way it turned out.

When her oldest son, Franzie, and his wife, Dorothy, came for a visit, she proudly displayed the quilt on her bed. Franzie shook his head. "Oh, Mom," he said, "you should never have done that. Now, Dennis [Leona's younger son] and I will fight over that quilt when you're gone."

Leona could not have squabbling sons, so that Christmas she gave them each a quilt. The grandchildren announced that they were next in line. So, in her 90s, she pieced six quilts from school bag scraps after doing four more for her grandchildren in 2011 and 2012.

The doctor advises her to save her eyes by resting them for 10 or 15 minutes during occasional breaks from her work. She does some reading and would love to read her Bible more. She has a large-print Bible, but she notices her eyes' weakness most when she reads.

Driving back to Topeka from Oklahoma, I remember that I should send Leona pictures of Esther and Emmeline and their friends filling the MCC school kits at their party. Leona needs to know how she is passing on the MCC school kit tradition, continuing to educate children from the Oklahoma Panhandle, where she began with children like me, to our granddaughters and friends in the Kansas City area, to the many school kits she has helped MCC send to children being educated around the world.

Raylene Hinz-Penner is a member of Southern Hills Mennonite Church in Topeka, Kan.

Children and adults at a birthday party in Topeka, Kan., where they fill Mennonite Central Committee school kit bags sewn by Leona Dirks Loepp. Photo provided

Too focused on **doing the Lord's work**

Sometimes we get so focused on doing 'the Lord's work' that we may actually miss the prompting of the Spirit.

by Derrick Ramer

One summer the junior high at the church I was serving traveled to St. Louis fo our summer service project. The first day, we worked in a community garden in a city neighborhood. We were pulling weeds and doing basic cleanup in the garden. Right beside the garden was a playground, and many of the neighborhood kids were making their way over to us to see what was going on.

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After a while, several of our youth were in the playground playing with the neighborhood kids. They helped them build some ramps for their skateboards and bikes and were having a lot of fun. A few of the sponsors reminded them that we were here to work in the garden and shooed them back to work.

These are junior highers we are talking about, so before long they were back in the playground playing with the neighborhood kids. Sponsors got on them again about the reason we were here and ushered them back to the garden. Not too long after that, the unfocused junior highers were again in the playground. I reminded them the third time that they needed to get back to work. Since we are talking about junior highers here, it likely happened another time or two.

That evening, we adults gathered all the youth together to have a Bible study and talk about the events of the day. As we shared stories from the day, a theme quickly emerged. The youth didn't talk about pulling weeds and making the garden look nice, but they shared stories of playing with the neighborhood kids. I heard story after story of how they built ramps, played games and had conversations with the children

The sponsors missed it. I missed it. But the youth did not miss it—the better option. I was so focused on the work we were supposed to be doing that I missed it. I apologized to the youth that evening. Anybody could have pulled those weeds, but there was only one opportunity on that day for our youth to interact with those neighborhood kids. Weeds will grow back, but lives may have been forever changed; the lives of the neighborhood kids and the lives of our youth.

This reminded me of the story of Mary and Martha found in Luke 10:38-42. It is so easy to be hard on Martha. I mean *Jesus* was at her house, and she was busy doing everything but spending time with him. Martha was running around the house. I imagine her thinking, Oh, my house is such a mess. I haven't vacuumed or dusted for weeks. And I have to make this meal not only for Jesus but for his disciples. I hope I have plenty of beef and noodles; oh, and I should bake some fresh zwiebach, and do I have everything I need to make a shoofly pie?

Martha was doing what she should be doing. She was attending to the needs of the house and preparing a meal. It was her job as a Jewish woman at that time to be doing these things, and she wanted to know where her help was.

Her help should have been her sister Mary, but she was sitting at Jesus' feet. Now to sit at the foot of a rabbi—a teacher—was not something a woman should have been doing. Someone who sits at the foot of a rabbi or teacher is doing so in order to be a disciple, to learn. That was not Mary's place. At that time, in that culture, in that setting, it was not Mary's—or any other woman's place—to be at the feet of Jesus.

For a better picture of who Mary is and what she is doing in this text, I turn to a different story, found in John 12:1-8. This story in many ways parallels our story from Luke. We find Jesus and the disciples at Mary and Martha's house for dinner. Martha is serving, and Mary is at Jesus' feet.

I mentioned that at the feet of a rabbi was not the place to find women. In this story there are several other things going on as well. William Barclay in his Bible commentary says that in Palestine, no respectable woman would be seen with her hair down, it would be put up. It was a sign of an immoral woman for her hair to be down. The Bible says that Mary wiped Jesus' feet with her hair. She couldn't do that if her hair was bound up as it should have been. On top of that, she just wasted what is commonly believed to have been one year's wages on perfume that she poured on Jesus' feet.

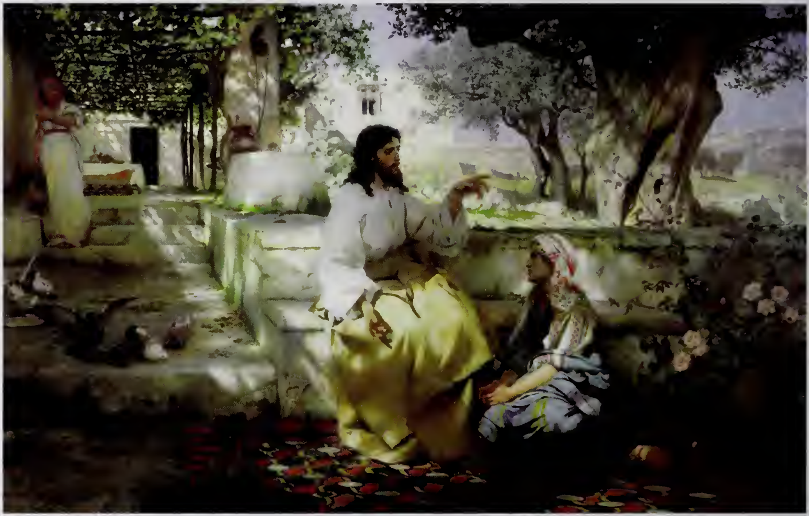
So Mary, a woman, was at Jesus' feet, wasted a year's wages and had her hair down like an immoral woman. Mary was out of line, and her actions were inappropriate and absurd. I can just imagine everybody in the room feeling awkward, offended and embarrassed for Mary.

> Anybody could have pulled those weeds, but there was only one opportunity on that day for our youth to interact with those neighborhood kids.

Martha, on the other hand, was doing what she was supposed to be doing. She was focused on doing the Lord's work. Doing the Lord's work for her was preparing the meal and caring for other's needs. It was her job and her calling. It was how she was serving the Lord. There were expectations for Mary, and she was breaking all of them. Her focus should have been on other things. Her way to "do the work of the Lord" should have been helping Martha. But Mary heard a different voice, and by listening to that voice she was allowing herself to follow the Holy Spirit. She allowed herself to be moved from the norm and to be daring enough to do something extraordinary.

I'm not saying that what Martha did was wrong, and I'm not saying that working in the garden that day in St. Louis was wrong. That was work, too, and it needed to be done. Jesus does not ever actually tell Martha that the work she was doing is bad or wrong. There would have been no food to eat if Martha had not prepared it. It is just that Mary had chosen to do something else, and it would not be taken from her. Mary listened to the Holy Spirit.

Some things we can do almost any time, but some things we will never do, unless we grasp the chance when it comes. —William Barclay



William Barclay said it best when he wrote, "There is here one great truth about life. Some things we can do almost any time, but some things we will never do, unless we grasp the chance when it comes. We are seized with the desire to do something fine and generous and big-hearted. But we put it off—we will do it tomorrow, and the fine impulse goes, and the thing is never done. Life is an uncertain thing. We think to utter some word of thanks or praise or love but we put it off, and often the word is never spoken" (*The Gospel of John*, Westminster Press, 1975).

I wonder if sometimes we get so focused on the details of things, so focused on doing the work of the Lord, that we may miss opportunities the Spirit presents us with. Mary had one opportunity to anoint her Lord's feet, and if she had not done something absurd she would have missed it. The youth had one opportunity to spend time with those neighborhood kids in St. Louis. If they had listened to us adults, they would have missed it.

Let's open our eyes. Let's open our ears. Let's open our hearts. What is God saying to you through the Holy Spirit? Where is God at work in Mennonite Church USA, in your community and in your lives?

Mary didn't let herself get boxed in by what was expected but boldly followed the Holy Spirit. Let's not be so focused on doing the Lord's work the way we expect it to be done that we miss an opportunity to follow the Holy Spirit and do something a little crazy, a little wild or perhaps even a bit inappropriate and absurd—something extraordinary.

Derrick Ramer is pastor of Emma Mennonite Church in Topeka, Ind.

Reading the Bible

How we miss the point of Scripture

by Bob Brown

We filter Scripture, every piece. We even hand pick what we read. That is why many churches use lectionaries. These filters are necessary: The Bible has 35,000 verses in it; we can't equally value every verse if we want to understand the enormity that is this book. Without filters we end up spending all our time pondering the begats and never get to the Beatitudes.

▷

Jesus even gives us the filter: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 22:37-40, NIV). Filters help us understand the story of God that we find in the Bible. Churches teach filters all the time. We say things like: "This section is very important," which implies that we don't need to worry too much about that other section.

Things we are passionate about or worried about or afraid of shape which verses are important and which aren't.

While filters are helpful and even necessary, they can create problems. One such problem is that our ways are not God's ways. Our filters can miss the point. We can read Galatians looking for the rules Paul tries to lay out for community, but in truth Galatians is a letter Paul wrote to a church that was spending too much time worrying about the rules.

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Filters are even more dangerous when we don't acknowledge or admit that we are using them. Many people you talk to will claim they don't use a filter when they read the Bible, but if we are honest, we all use filters every time we pick up the Scriptures. Things we are passionate about or worried about or afraid of shape which verses are important and which aren't. These concerns shape which books and verses we read all the time and which ones we pass over. If we are honest, most people have managed to never even open their Bibles to at least a few of its 66 books. These filters cause problems because many of them do more to protect us from God and insulated us from the parts of Scripture that make us uncomfortable than they help us learn about God's desires for us.

There are several common filters used in churches across the country in many different churches (Mennonite and otherwise) that should be abandoned immediately. These filters actually get in the way of hearing about the character of God. They are based more on our fears and our desire for comfort than on an honest desire to be disciples of Jesus.

We must recognize the following filters and abandon them immediately so that God may speak more deeply into our lives and we can hear the challenging and life-changing message in the Bible. These are the three filters that are the most common and/or most distracting from the gospel of Jesus shared in our Scripture:

1. Jesus gets mad when I get dirty. Aka: God's making a list and checking it twice.

When we look at the 10 commandments, we make *all* of them about us instead of understanding that the first four are about our relationship to God, and the last six are about our relationship to people. We neglect justice for the poor, the orphan, the widow, the person in jail, even though these are mentioned in the Bible again and again. Since Jesus gets mad when I get dirty, it is really all about us. When we use this filter, Jesus is mad not because we abused the poor or the widow but because we broke a rule. But this way of thinking ignores the fact that God is not petty. God doesn't make up rules so that we have to jump through hoops. God guides and directs us so that we will treat others better. Because everyone on Earth is a child of God.

2. "Believing" means saying the sinner's prayer. Aka: I said, "Jesus was my Lord and Savior." What else do you want?

With this filter we skip over the Sermon on the Mount, the sheep and goats, basically everything Jesus says besides John 3:16. We don't hear Jesus say, "Whatever you do to the least of these you do to me." Instead we focus on Romans 10:9: "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." This focus often neglects what it means to believe and assumes what it means to be saved. We are not saved by our works, but a belief that doesn't change how we live our lives isn't really a belief at all.

3. God isn't doing anything now but is waiting until later. Aka: Just wait till Jesus gets home.

This is the filter that produced the *Left Behind* series. Using this filter, we search for obscure prophecies that will tell us the day and the hour or the how and why of Jesus' coming. We decide we don't need to change the world or even take care of it because Jesus will come and make all things new—at some later date. But what if God's time is now? What if we are supposed to be doing God's work, instead of just waiting for it? If we are waiting for the kingdom of God to be brought by Jesus, then we have forgotten that we (the church) are the body of Christ on Earth.

Why am I tearing down all these filters? They shape how we read the Bible, telling us which verses are important and which ones we don't really need to pay much attention to. When we are studying a huge and diverse book like the Bible, filters do help. However, these filters worry about comfort and power and security and don't focus on the things of God.

We will always read with filters, but we need to recognize we are using them and then choose better ones—ones that encourage transformed lives now, not passive faith. We need filters that allow God's mercy, love and call to action to speak through the text instead of missing the forest for the trees.

Here are a few filters we should try on:

1. God is patient and faithful to us even though we aren't faithful.

What if this is the story of God and of God's people? What if God has been calling us to him since the beginning of eternity, and we (we, not just those other people) are still turning away? Does this filter shed some light on the story of Abraham lying about Sarah being his wife? Does it open up the story of Judas or Jonah?

2. Love wins over power.

What if God's narrative is about justice—about justice and loving mercy that is poured over the whole world? What if we are called to turn away from our desires for comfort, security and power so that we can share God's love with the world? Are the 10 commandments and even all those laws in Deuteronomy a little more understandable when we hear them as God's call to justice instead of rules made up by some far off deity?

> What if we are called to turn away from our desires for comfort, security and power so that we can share God's love with the world?

3. God's time is now, and he calls us to make his kingdom present.

Does this filter help you understand why Jesus had to come and kickstart the work of God? Does this tell you why he trusted the church to flawed humans? Can you see that God loves you and cares for you right now? Can you see that God wants you to tell everyone about God's love for them with words, acts of kindness and charity and your thirst for justice?

All these filters are human creations—the ones I'm rejecting and the ones I'm recommending. We always read using a filter, whether we realize it or not.

What if God is a mystery unfolding before us that becomes more beautiful every day?

Bob Brown is pastor of Stahl Mennonite Church in Johnstown, Pa.

Plan for your stewardship journey

Larry Miller is president and CEO of Everence. H retires at the end of August.

Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.—2 Corinthians 13:11

Stewardship is one of our church's priorities. As stated in the Purposeful Plan of Mennonite Church USA, we seek "to reflect God's abundance through our generosity as God's stewards, in order to achieve missional goals across all parts of the church."

To faithfully achieve this goal, we need to bring some level of intentional financial planning to our lives. "Financial planning" often connotes wealth accumulation and financial self-sufficiency. What does it mean to do financial planning from an Anabaptist faith perspective?

Discovering God's purpose

Becoming faithful stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us is rooted in our relationship with Christ. Beryl Jantzi, stewardship education director at Everence, says, "Stewardship is everything you do after you say you believe." Financial planning begins with discovering God's purpose and plan for our lives. No matter what level of resources we have or our stage of life, God calls us to a path of Christian stewardship—and integrating our faith and values into our financial decisions is a good guide for that journey.

Living generously

Financial planning grows out of our relationships in the faith community. Discerning the use of our money, time and talent for the benefit of God's children helps us develop habits of generosity and care for others. Good financial planning helps us see and understand God's abundance in our lives, which gives us a sense of financial security and peace. That releases us to manage our resources with open hands of generosity rather than clinched fists of fear and anxiety. Living generously is about putting our faith into action.

Becoming an effective steward of our financial resources is a multifaceted journey that can be complicated to walk through alone.

Planning for your journey

Becoming an effective steward of our financial resources is a multifaceted journey that can be complicated to walk through alone. Sometimes we need someone else to alert us to potential opportunities, detours and missteps and to hold us accountable along the way.

That is where Everence can help. Our professional advisors can work alongside you to determine a financial path that fits your goals and values. Together, we help you achieve what many never experience in their financial lives: the chance to find financial peace.

A financial plan can give you an overarching understanding and guide for your stewardship journey, including:

- **Cash flow planning:** By learning how to manage your money in ways that are efficient for you and that honor God, you can remove stress, increase peace, live freely and give generously.
- **Protection planning:** You can't always know what will happen in the future, but you can take steps to have resources in place for your loved ones in case the unexpected happens.
- **Investment planning:** From retirement income to college funding, there are many reasons we invest our money. In order to have that money for our future needs, we must think strategically about the way we are investing.
- **Retirement planning:** Many people are afraid of running out of money in retirement. Whether you're 25 or 65, it's important to determine how much you will likely need in retirement and how you might get there.
- **Tax planning:** Nearly every financial decision you make has tax consequences, and it's important to understand how it might impact your financial situation.
- **Estate planning:** Creating an estate plan is one of the most important acts of Christian stewardship. It's a way for you to make your wishes known and take some heavy burdens off the shoulders of your loved ones.
- **Charitable planning:** Most financial planners don't focus on this seventh area of your financial life. But Everence believes that being generous is a significant way to live out your faith. Developing a financial plan helps give you the freedom to be more generous, so you can make an impact on the ministries closest to your heart.

Everence advisors specialize in helping you identify your values and incorporating them into your financial decisions. Our systematic process helps you develop an overarching financial plan for your life, and our financial planning fees are based, in part, on your personal situation.

A stewardship plan is a way for you to achieve financial peace and live with open hands of generosity, regardless of where you are at in life. TM

Is it time for Anabaptist University?

We need to consider how higher education can serve and be served by the Anabaptist/Mennonite community while dealing with the complex reality of institutional histories, economics, student dynamics and technology.

Here are some possible models:

The cut-em loose model

In this model, the Mennonite Education Agency in concert with Mennonite Church USA officials would take action to sever official denominational links to some (or all) colleges and universities. The administrators in these agencies may decide that the cost of higher education and the dwindling percentage of Mennonites attending denominational colleges make denominational higher education too expensive and unnecessary.

This decision would mean that the individual campuses would have to determine an alternative mission and find new sources of money and students. Absent solutions to these issues, some (or all) Anabaptist/Mennonite institutions may close.

The right-sizing model

This model would require that all parties have faith in a denominational body, either Mennonite Education Agency or, preferably, a specifically appointed task force. This task force would be empowered to make recommendations to bring denominational higher education campuses and programs in line with available resources and perceived needs. Campuses might be consolidated, programs reduced (or enlarged) and personnel reduced (or expanded).

There are many possibilities. Perhaps all Mennonite education would be consolidated on one campus. Perhaps one campus would focus on the humanities and one on the sciences. Perhaps some programs would be terminated and others, which fit mission and need, begun or expanded.

The university or consortium model

A university model would be similar to many public institutions that have scattered locations with a central administration assisted by personnel of appropriate title and rank at each campus. Thus the "Anabaptist University" would have one governing board and one president. A common budget and centralized purchasing operation would be implemented. There would be one central admissions office and strategy. The fund-raising network would be consolidated and made more efficient. Registrar functions could be consolidated. Student mobility, even faculty mobility, would be facilitated as necessary. While there would be many details to be worked out, it has advantages of common purpose, efficient use of resources and a reduction in administrators.

The virtual model

Those who develop online courses have sparked an intense debate about the meaning of education and the meaning of a degree. Proponents argue that online discussion groups and the unlimited resources on the Internet provide what is needed for information to be both acquired and processed. Critics have argued that true education requires the intimacy of personal communication in the context of a community of learners. And there is substantial disagreement about the need for extracurricular programs such as music ensembles and athletic teams.

A virtual model would require careful attention to education quality and assessment/verification. It may require rethinking the characteristics of an effective teacher. It would certainly require evaluation of what physical base is necessary, what technology and technology assistance would be needed, and the implementation of an effective registrar process.

The virtual/residential hybrid model

Some observers have suggested a creative hybrid that makes use of the resources and economic efficiencies of virtual education, while retaining a limited residential requirement. Students would be expected to make several short stays on campus, where the best features of person-to-person learning would occur.

At this point there does not seem to be an overwhelming reason to select any of the above. However, given the frenetic pace of contemporary social and economic change, strategic planning demands that all options be explored. Given the length of time it took Mennonites to "merge" and the many vested interests involved, it is time to begin an intensive, wide-ranging discussion (i.e., one that goes beyond the small population of college administrators and church officials) about the future of Mennonite higher education.

Choosing a model of higher education for the 21st century and infusing that model with Anabaptist/Mennonite foundational principles will require the best critical thinking that can be mustered. It is imperative that the task begin. TM

Duane Kauffmann is a member of College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.

It is time to begin an intensive, wide-ranging discussion about the future of Mennonite higher education.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Kenneth Hochstetler named new Everence CEO

He brings broad financial services expertise with deep faith and service roots.

On June 13, the Everence board of directors announced that Kenneth D. Hochstetler will become the organization's next President and CEO.

Hochstetler will assume the role upon the retirement of President and CEO Larry D. Miller at the end of August.

Hochstetler currently serves as senior executive vice president at Univest Corporation, which provides a wide range of banking, trust, financial planning, investment, foundation and insurance services through a network of approximately 40 offices in southeastern Pennsylvania.

"Ken will bring deep and broad experience in the many services of a financial organization," said D. Duane Oswald, Everence board chair. "He has over two decades of management and executive leadership experience in banking, insurance and investments."

He is strongly committed to the church and is actively involved in the Anabaptist faith community.
—Pat Swartzendruber

New Everence CEO Kenneth Hochstetler

"He is strongly committed to the church and is actively involved in the Anabaptist faith community," said Pat Swartzendruber, chair of the presidential succession committee and Everence board member. "He has contributed volunteer service to many local and national nonprofits, demonstrating his strong sense of call to serve the church and community."

"I am grateful for the opportunity to use my experience gained in private industry for the good of the stewardship organization serving the Mennonite and Anabaptist faith community," said Hochstetler. "I look forward to joining the Everence team in helping members integrate their faith and values into financial decisions."

Hochstetler's background

Joining Univest in 1992, Hochstetler currently serves as chief executive of the following Univest subsidiaries: investments, advisory services, foundation, municipal pension services and wealth management services. He previously worked at Meridian Bank in eastern Pennsylvania.

Hochstetler holds a bachelor's degree in business and computer science from Goshen (Ind.) College and a master's degree in business administration from Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa.

He attends Blooming Glen (Pa.) Mennonite Church, where he serves as chair of its congregational leadership board. He is on the board of directors of Goshen (Ind.) College, co-chair of the campaign leadership council of the North Penn Commons, chair of the Souderton Industrial Development Authority and a long-term planning committee member of the Bucks-Mont Coalition for Evangelism.

CEO succession process

Hochstetler's appointment was approved by the Everence board as well as by the Executive Committee of Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board.

The CEO succession process started last fall, when Miller announced his retirement. In addition to Swartzendruber, other succession committee members included the following individuals:

- D. Duane Oswald, Everence board chair (ex-officio);
- R. Clair Sauder, Praxis Mutual Fund board trustee;
- Richard Thomas, Mennonite Church USA executive leadership rep;
- Donna Voth, Everence board member;
- LaVern Yutzy, former Everence board member;
- Ervin Stutzman, Mennonite Church USA executive director (ex-officio).

Founded in 1945, Everence will celebrate its 70th anniversary in 2015. The organization serves approximately 80,000 members and manages $2.4 billion in assets (as of Dec. 31, 2013). Everence is the stewardship agency of Mennonite Church USA.—*Everence*

Clinton Frame to leave Indiana-Michigan Conference

Congregation exploring relationship with South Central Mennonite Conference

Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., affirmed a recommendation to leave Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference in a congregational meeting on June 4.

There were 204 votes presented, and the recommendation passed by 95 percent.

Terry Diener

According to a June 7 email from Terry Diener, lead pastor of Clinton Frame, "Over the years, it has seemed to us that the conversations within Indiana-Michigan have been more about exploring the edges of our theological diversity rather than a common vision of God's transforming power in our lives."

Also, Clinton Frame is located in a community where other Mennonite leaders have taken public stances that "affirm same-sex marriage and support the LGBTQ agenda," which "runs counter to our witness and outreach," Diener wrote.

The recommendation to leave Indiana-Michigan was brought to Clinton Frame by the congregational oversight board.

It came after discussion and prayer at a leadership level and a two-year congregational process, wrote Diener. Clinton Frame plans to end its relationship with Indiana-Michigan on June 30 and is beginning to explore a relationship with South Central Mennonite Conference.

Diener and Dan Miller, conference pastor of Indiana-Michigan, have had numerous conversations throughout this process.

Miller attended a congregational meeting in January, when it was decided that Clinton Frame leadership would begin to explore options with other conferences and continue to process the relationship with Mennonite Church USA.

In an interview on June 5, Miller said the conference is sad to say goodbye to Clinton Frame. The church will still be in the conference's geographical area but will be realigning itself within Mennonite Church USA.

"We understand the church's call to focus on its calling and mission … and we affirm that," Miller said.

Diener wrote: "We seek to hold to the 1995 *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*. We have a heart to welcome all people and long for all people to experience the transforming, redeeming love of Jesus Christ. … We are seeking a conference connection that has a more focused conversation around our shared mission, vision and values and is more willing to publicly attest to those commitments. We value relationships and desire to continue good relationships with Indiana-Michigan churches and relate as good neighbors. This decision is about identity, clarifying our mission, vision and values. We strongly feel the grief that comes with ending our membership in a conference in which we are charter members and which has been a central part of our congregational life and identity over the past 100 years."

Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference is a community of 76 congregations with just over 10,000 members in Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee.

South Central Mennonite Conference is a regional conference of Mennonite Church USA. Its churches are located in Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, Arkansas, Texas and Mexico.—*Anna Groff*

DeWayne Bontrager

Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., celebrated its 150 anniversary last October. Clinton Frame has about 430 active members and 625 active attenders.

Volunteer helps plant common ground

Food Bank of Elkhart County bridges divides, works for common good

Isaac Fast

Katie Jantzen helps fill a van with fresh vegetables from a produce auction in Elkhart, Ind., for her service placement at Church Community Services.

When working with a diverse group of volunteers, it can seem impossible to get them to agree on anything. But at Seed to Feed, volunteers agree to set aside their differences to feed 7,200 families.

"I haven't been able to find anyone who can argue against providing healthy, local food to people who need it," says Katie Jantzen. She is a Mennonite Voluntary Service participant in Elkhart, Ind. Jantzen co-coordinates Church Community Services Seed to Feed program.

Providing fresh food

The initiative began in 2012 and grew out of a need for local, fresh produce in Elkhart County. This matched the local farmers' passion to provide.

In 2013, Jantzen helped Seed to Feed disperse a total of 150,000 pounds of food to families in Elkhart County. The harvest includes fruits and vegetables from 10 area gardens and 64,000 pounds of potatoes, and donations from other local farms and gardens. They also received $50,000 in donations from the proceeds of other farmland. This helps to provide the logistical support needed for the initiative.

Building community

Creating community is just as important as supplying fresh food, says Kurt Bullard. He has been raising vegetables for 23 years and is a member of the Seed to Feed board.

Men Alive is one of many communities that contribute to Seed to Feed. Launched in January, Men Alive is a program of Church Community Services that seeks to empower men. Each afternoon for 20 weeks, eight men gather to garden, work in the food warehouse and learn about nutrition, cooking, community and responsibility to their neighbors.

"We aim to help these men become healthy in all areas of their lives: mentally, socially, spiritually and physically," says Sean Murphy, program coordinator.

Bridging different perspectives

Jantzen has seen Elkhart strengthened as volunteers work together. Democrats, Republicans, church members, businesspeople, farmers, neighbors, students and food pantry clients have all volunteered. They have served a total of 8,000 hours since the initiative began two years ago.

Volunteers bring their different farming and gardening experiences, and so does Jantzen. She grew up among large-scale farms and granaries in Nebraska. At Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., Jantzen worked on the campus garden. It was there that her passion for creation care flourished.

Even the Seed to Feed leaders have a variety of experiences. Dave Hochstetler, the co-coordinator with Jantzen, brings his business background from his career in the RV business. A pastor, a duck farmer, a livestock auctioneer and crop farmers give other perspectives on the Seed to Feed leadership board.

Support for Seed to Feed comes from a variety of people and perspectives. But they work together to provide food to hungry people. On March 10, a local farmer nominated Seed to Feed for a grant from Monsanto, a Fortune 500 seed company. As a result, Seed to Feed received $2,500.

Seed to Feed has also received a variety of heirloom seed donations, which have been passed down for generations. Although they are known for smaller yields, the seeds are held in high regard because they have fruits with more flavor and are better adapted to local growing conditions.

Jantzen's assignment with Seed to Feed has not only impacted the community but also affected her own life. "[By caring for both people and creation] this placement has been a good way for me to live out my own faith," she says.

Her MVS experience taught her how to live in community and disagree respectfully. While families often share a set of assumptions or a similar culture, MVS participants bring a wide variety of backgrounds to their unit. For example, some may expect the MVS unit to eat together once a week; others assume they will eat together each day. But despite differing expectations, MVS workers are committed to living together as a community.

"My two years with MVS have expanded my view on a lot of things," says Jantzen. "I've learned that perspective is incredibly important—knowing my own and understanding that of others. People with different perspectives can wind up with the same end goal … and work together to make Seed to Feed a success."—*Kelsey Hochstetler of Mennonite Mission Network*

Mennonites in Burkina Faso grow by 12 percent

Growth of the church occurs in a heavily Muslim context.

Recent baptisms have swelled the membership of Eglise Evangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso (Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso) by more than 12 percent.

Siaka Traoré, national president of the Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso, was surprised and pleased when he learned about the large number of baptismal candidates this year.

"I cannot explain [this wave of interest, other than to say] that I believe God wants to grow the church," Traoré said.

In the three Sundays surrounding Easter, 63 new Mennonites joined five different congregations in Burkina Faso. The national church had a membership of about 500 at the beginning of 2014, with 44 of these members baptized in the weeks around Christmas.

Because of a shortage of pastors in these rapidly blossoming congregations, baptisms are often scheduled to coincide with special events—holidays or ordinations—that bring church leaders from more densely populated areas to village churches that don't have their own pastors.

Baptism by immersion has special significance during the Easter season, as believers act out their desire to follow Jesus' example to die to the world's standards. Emerging from the water, they rise into newness of life.

"I wanted to identify with Jesus in his death and resurrection as I abandoned my old life and begin to live a new life," Lydie Yougbaré said after her Easter Day baptism in the city of Bobo Dioulasso. "When I came out of the water, I felt light, like all my burdens had slipped off."

According to Burkina Faso's most recent government census (2006), more than 60 percent of the population practices Islam, and 4 percent belong to a Protestant denomination.

In a context where Muslims make up the majority of the population, the decision to be baptized is not to be taken lightly, as it may result in derision and even persecution. Traoré said he rejoices when people count the cost and still want to be baptized into the Mennonite church.

"[Those who choose baptism] are people fully conscious of what they want," Traoré said. "Praise the Lord for faithful work and witness over years in each of the locations that have laid the groundwork for these decisions for Christ."

Preparation for baptism usually takes place over a three-month period and includes basic Bible knowledge, an understanding of church life and instruction in evangelism, ethics, practical aspects of Christian living and Mennonite history.

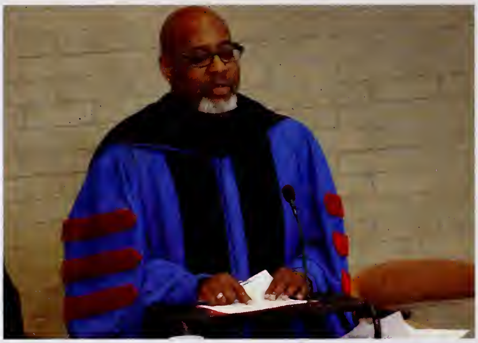
The church is in the process of standardizing a curriculum for baptismal candidates. Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission, Evangelical Mennonite Conference, Mennonite Mission Network, Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Church Canada Witness, and Comité de Mission Mennonite Français (French Mennonite Mission Committee) work with the Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso through a partnership council.—*Lynda Hollinger-Janzen for Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission/Mennonite Mission Network*

Frank Nacanabo

Lydie Yougbaré emerges from her baptism and into the fellowship of the Bobo Dioulasso congregation of Eglise Evangélique Mennonite du Burkina Faso (Evangelical Mennonite Church of Burkina Faso).

AMBS graduates 35, representing seven nations

Graduates encouraged to take love and lessons into the world.


Mary Klassen

James Logan, associate professor at Earlham College, Richmond, Ind., spoke at the AMBS graduation.

Thirty-five graduates of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) were reminded of "the simple yet not so simple four-letter word: love" by speaker James Logan at the commencement service on May 24 at College Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.

Logan, associate professor at Earlham College, Richmond, Ind., affirmed the ways graduates are already involved in ministries of meeting needs. He reminded them that even in the midst of all the challenges in their lives and work, "the power of Christian love will seek to find a way to break through to a new and better place, where peace, justice, grace and mercy will dance out loud—or so we hope."

Naming ways the world needs the love and contributions of the graduates, Logan pointed to violence and conflict; children dying because of malnutrition, lack of water and substandard medical care; black and Hispanic men incarcerated because of racial injustice and how consumerism and "me-ism" seem to be the highest measure of what it means to be human.

As you go into the world looking for your kind of Christian love—a "refusing-to-give-up-on-one-another-and-the-world kind of love, take the complicated lessons you learned at AMBS with you," Logan said.

Make sure you go forward wrapped in Christian love "with a wise mixture of toughness, gentleness, joy, courage, prudence, temperance, humility, mercy and a very, very difficult peaceableness," he added.

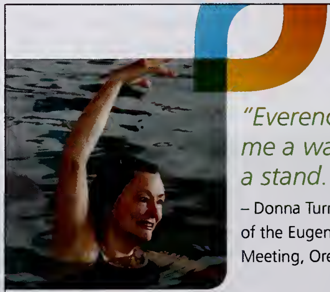
The supreme example, Logan said, is Jesus: "aching and suffering love for the very humanity that nailed him to and then hung him from a cross." Real Christian love must not be an escape, he added; "real Christian love is an entry into the needs of the present, sharing in its suffering, its needs and activities, and its hope."

Logan is associate professor of religion and associate professor and director of African and African-American studies. He holds an M.A. in theology and ethics from AMBS and a Ph.D. in religion and society from Princeton Seminary.

First Corinthians 13 was read in four languages represented among the graduates. Martin Navarro read in Spanish, Chaiya Hadtasunsern in Thai, Theo Odhiambo in Swahil and Lydia Nofziger in English.

Sixteen graduates received the Master of Divinity degree, representing three years of study, and three earned the Master of Arts: Peace Studies; two the Master of Arts: Theological Studies and two the Master of Arts in Christian Formation. Certificates representing one year of study were presented to 11 students, and one student completed the AMBS–Great Plains Foundation Program of Study.

Six graduates are from Canada, one of them originally from Korea, another living in Germany. One graduate is living in Korea, another in Paraguay; one each is from Tanzania and Thailand.—*Mary Klassen of AMBS*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Bethel College graduates 105

Schrag reminds graduates of 'valuable grain' gleaned from a Bethel education

Bethel College's Class of 2014 may be among the rare few who actually remember the commencement address. That's for at least two reasons: It may have been the shortest ever and it was all in rhyme.

Commencement speaker Dale Schrag, who retires at the end of June after 30 years at Bethel, most recently as campus pastor and director of church relations, is known to the campus community for many things.

One that the Concert Choir looks forward to almost every year is a recap of the spring break choir tour done completely in rhyme. Schrag decided to do the same with his commencement address, "Always be a Thresher."

Schrag began his address on May 18 thus:

"Commencement, we would all agree, / Is a very special time. / But commencement addresses can sometimes be deadly, / So I'll try to make this one rhyme.

"I'll admit it's a different way to proceed— / Perhaps a rhetorical trick. / But I'm simply trying to do my best / To make these brief comments stick."

Schrag went on to consider the Bethel College mascot, the Thresher, noting that "the special thing about threshers is they separate wheat from chaff" and then expanding on the wheat metaphor.

Valuable wheat, Schrag said, can be found within Bethel's four core values of discipleship, scholarship, service and integrity. The latter, he said, is not only a matter of "character and conscience" but also of integration. "Life is not fragmented, ... so integrate your faith and learning into a consistent whole.

"There's a ton of cultural chaff out there," Schrag said. "Constantly search for life-giving grain: Always be a Thresher."

"I know this speech was very short, / But I've said what I intended," Schrag concluded (the address clocked in at about 7½ minutes). "We're kind of sad to see you go. / As a class you've been just splendid.

"Know that in your time with us/You were a special gift. / And now as you are graduates/Our relationship will shift.

"But connected we will all remain— / A community somehow./Because, you see, through thick and thin, / We're all true Threshers now!"

Brad Born, vice president for academic affairs, noted that 83 of the 105 graduates are from Kansas—along with one from Mexico, one from Peru by way of Colorado, and one from Brazil by way of Kansas. At least seven are following a long-standing Bethel tradition of taking voluntary service assignments starting within the next several months.

Born presented the 2014 Ralph P. Schrag Distinguished Teaching Award to Allen Jantz, professor of education.

Jantz has an undergraduate degree in mathematical sciences from Bethel College. He earned a master's degree in educational administration and supervision and a Ph.D. in educational leadership from Wichita (Kan.) State University. Jantz joined the Bethel faculty in 1996 and has led the Bethel teacher education program for 18 years.

At the baccalaureate service earlier in the day, three graduating seniors and one parent reflected on the impact Bethel College had had on them.

Martin Olson, Denver, said, "The faith my time here has given me is love," he concluded. "Always love."

Katie Regier, Whitewater, Kan., said, "Bethel has impacted my faith [through] this community and this kind of love [which] is not ordinary. I pray that we [the Class of 2014] can set examples of faith like those we've been given and pay it forward into the future."

Rosa Barrera, administrative assistant to the Bethel president, has worked at the college all four years her son Danny was a student. They each gave their perspectives on being at Bethel with the other.

"I am excited to see what God has in store for me and all of us for the years to come," Danny said.

"Parents," Rosa said, "it is time for us to turn the wheel over to our fine, educated young daughters and sons, because the world awaits them.

"Graduates, when in doubt and confusion about your purpose, may God light your way and give you peace in his plan for you. May ... the gifts you have received in your studies ... become a source of inspiration and blessing for the world."*—Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College*

Vada Snider

Stephanie Shogren, Hesston, Kan., shakes hands with President Perry D. White. Behind her are Samantha Sheridan of Newton, Kan., and San Diego, Calif., and Casey Schunn, Whitewater, Kan.

Goshen students' quick response helps save a life

On a class trip, an unexpected layover became a life-saving opportunity.

Photo provided

Goshen College students Julianna Tennefoss (left) and Molly Malone (right) put their CPR skills to use in the Munich Airport during a May term trip.

Somewhere in the world, there is a man who owes his life in part to Goshen (Ind.) College students. Call it a coincidence, call it fate or call it divine intervention. Whatever you call it, the students were fortunately in the right place at the right time.

On May 1, not long into the second leg of their flight to Thessaloniki, Greece, for a May term class to study the Apostle Paul and the ancient church, a flight carrying 30 Goshen students and faculty made an emergency landing due to a technical issue.

The students and other passengers disembarked in Munich, Germany, and learned that a cracked windshield was responsible for their unplanned stopover.

Frustrated and jet-lagged, the group gathered in the terminal, gearing up for a long layover until the next available flight to Greece.

As the group settled in and looked for food and free Wi-Fi, a Goshen student noticed that a man nearby had collapsed.

He was sprawled in the middle of the terminal, his body lying across his shoulder bag. It appeared he had not been breathing for a while.

"As he was motionless on the floor of the airport I could tell he was in bad shape," says Seth Conley, assistant professor of communication and a co-leader of the class. "I saw that his face was beyond blue, it was deathly gray and still. One or two people stood and stared down at him but really didn't appear to know how to help."

"Another man who spoke only a little English tried to find a pulse in his neck and said to me, 'It's done,' then he walked on," Conley says.

But it wasn't done.

Panicked, Conley ran around the corner to a group of Goshen students who had just sat down to eat lunch, asking if they knew CPR.

Molly Malone and Julianna Tennefoss, both education majors who had completed CPR training, jumped up to help.

"They appeared fearless," Conley says.

Malone, a 2014 graduate from South Bend, Ind., and Tennefoss, a senior from Greenwood, Del., ran around the corner to the spot where the man lay, lifeless.

"It was like my body automatically kicked into gear," Tennefoss says. "I felt a sense of urgency but in the moment also a sense of calm. When we reached the man, I remember looking into his face and feeling my heart sink."

Malone began compressions, and Tennefoss called for an AED machine. A third student, Brett Conrad, had noticed one in the airport earlier and sprinted to grab it.

"While I was getting food, I saw the AED machine and thought, Those seem handy; we should have more of them. It was a really lucky thought," says Conrad, a senior from Lakewood, Colo.

The three, accompanied by an airline worker at this point, continued compressions and attached the AED shock pads to the man's body. The machine required 30 seconds to get an accurate read on his heart.

"It was the longest 30 seconds I've ever experienced," Tennefoss says. "As we waited, I looked into his face for any response and was drawn in by the blank look in his eyes. Suddenly, life seemed so fragile that all I wanted to do was get on the plane, go home and hug everyone I loved."

The AED machine did not receive any response from his heart, so they delivered a shock. The man coughed and took three quivering breaths, then fell silent again. The students continued performing CPR.

"The next thing I remember was Brett pulling me back as the paramedics ran in to work, then sitting back at the table where we were eating, listening to the paramedics work on the man," Malone says.

The paramedics took over chest compressions. They worked feverishly to get the man's heart restarted.

Eventually, they carted him down the terminal and to a hospital. The students were told that the man was alive and talking to paramedics when he was taken away.

"Nobody knew how long he had been down; I don't know how long we had been doing compressions before the paramedics came," Malone says. "Nobody knew a whole lot other than that man had been blue, lying on a floor, dead. It still feels completely unreal."

As the group went back to waiting for a flight, Conley couldn't help but wonder if there was a reason the group ended up in Munich.

"Did God allow us to be diverted to give this man a chance at life? Did God allow our Goshen College education majors trained in CPR to be there at that place and that exact moment for that purpose?"—*Brian Yoder Schlabach of Goshen College*

Church purchases *Shine On: A Story Bible* for every child

Story Bible **is a basic tool in the new** ***Shine*** **children's curriculum.**

Harrisonburg (Va.) Mennonite Church has purchased 80 copies of *Shine On: A Story Bible*—the largest order to date of the new multiculturally illustrated children's Bible story book—to give to each child in their congregation in kindergarten through grade 5.

Harrisonburg Mennonite has been the third largest user in North America of children's Sunday school materials jointly produced by MennoMedia and Brethren Press. It is also one of the biggest supporters for the new *Shine* curriculum development campaign, having contributed $5,000 toward the costs that accrue before any sales begin.

Lenora Bell, head of children's ministries at Harrisonburg Mennonite, says the congregation traditionally uses MennoMedia/Brethren Press curriculum, even though she's tested materials from other publishers and denominations: "We find that our denominational material best follows the statement of purpose put together by our own Sunday school superintendents, teachers and staff." She says that using a curriculum that teaches children "about our understanding of faith week after week matters to us."

Bell notes that they like how over a three-year period, "this curriculum will cover important characters and stories from Genesis to Revelation, not just the familiar stories that we see in other curricula on the market." She says they feel that the educational principles used in past curricula have successfully helped children reflect on society from a Christian perspective in different ways at each age level.

"We are looking forward to using the new story Bible over a three-year period so that children can see how stories from the Old and New Testament fall into place," says Bell.

"The Sunday school superintendents and I are still trying to decide how we will present the story Bibles to the children," Bell says. "But for now, they are stacked on a lobby display and building lots of excitement among the children."

Teachers will use *Shine On: A Story Bible* to tell the weekly story in the classroom, and children will be able to reread and page through their story Bibles at home with their families and on their own.

"This is an outstanding take-home connection unlike we've seen in the past. We are tech savvy, but I believe our families need access to a book of this nature," Bell says.

Bell also stresses the role that teachers play in nurturing faith formation. "Teachers frequently have limited amounts of time to prepare, and our denominational curriculum provides teacher training, prayers, encouragement and activities for children's different learning styles," she says. But teachers can also come up with their own ideas to use in the flexible curricula.

Shine On: A Story Bible retails for $24.99. Free shipping is available on orders of three cartons or more, equal to 42 or more books. See www.MennoMedia.org or call 800-245-7894.—*MennoMedia*

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Taking Sister Care 'home' to Puerto Rico

Carolyn Heggen and Elizabeth Soto-Albrecht lead seminar where they grew up.

Carolyn Heggen

Maureen Mehne, left, and Angie Ortiz Diaz, right, practice a ritual of compassion for our wounds.

Coming full circle leaves powerful impressions. This was certainly the case when Carolyn Heggen and Elizabeth Soto-Albrecht co-led the Mennonite Women USA Sister Care seminar March 21-22 in Puerto Rico.

Heggen spent her formative years as a girl in Puerto Rico, the island where her American parents met while they were serving with different Anabaptist mission organizations. Soto-Albrecht was born in Puerto Rico, came to live in the United States when she was a baby and returned to the island as a 12-year-old. After receiving a degree at the University of Puerto Rico, she started at Seminario Evangelico de Puerto Rico, then transferred and finished her degree at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

Heggen lived and worked in Puerto Rico post-college. A friend and classmate from her middle school years, Eileen Rolon, was the local organizer of the event, and her assistant, Mim Godshall, was another friend of Heggen's.

Soto-Albrecht, too, felt the love and welcome from the friends and leaders who helped form her leadership, She was reminded during the seminar of the significance around her home church's trust in her as a young woman, sponsoring her attendance at seminary when that was not a typical avenue for young women to take at the time. "My overwhelming impression after revisiting these women is that we cannot afford to leave young leaders behind. We need to give them space for their leadership to develop. There is both a lack of women and young people as leaders in the churches of Puerto Rico, and I'd like to see that change," she said.

In Puerto Rico the recurring theme the women shared both with the large group and privately with Soto-Albrecht and Heggen centered on loss: the loss of family members leaving the island to find economic footing in the United States, the loss of loved ones dying too young and the loss of trust in leaders of the church because of sexual exploitation, abuse and patriarchy.

Another unexpected bridge was strengthened between the Mennonite churches of Puerto Rico and Mennonite Church USA during this Sister Care. When Mennonite Church USA was born in 2001, the Puerto Rico Mennonite church chose not to affiliate with the larger denomination for a variety of reasons, one being the feeling that their needs and interests would be overlooked in the context of a larger organization. After this decision, the Puerto Rico Mennonite church drifted from Anabaptism and aligned more with Pentecostal traditions. After 10 years, the Puerto Rico Mennonite church decided to become an associate member of the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Women leaders from the Puerto Rico Mennonite churches expressed gratitude for the Sister Care manual. They reported they have never had Mennonite resources specifically for women in their congregations.

Participants' educational spread spanned from low literacy to sophisticated government employees. Heggen said: "What continues to amaze me as we share Sister Care around the world is how well these materials are received. ... whether in a rural community like Kokomo or a bustling megacity like Kolkata, [all of us] want to feel we are precious to God, and our life matters, and someone will be there for us when life is hard and we don't know how to keep going."

Of the 10 Mennonite churches in Puerto Rico, eight sent participants for a total of 76 women. A women's group in two of the Puerto Rican churches expressed its desire to go through the manual together with others in their congregation who could not participate in the Sister Care seminar. Their insistence: they want men to be in the room, too. The women want the men in their lives to hear this work so that women from the Puerto Rico Sister Care are committed to lead workshops to co-ed groups from their churches.

During the final blessing ritual a participant said, "If nothing else had happened this whole weekend except the opportunity to participate in this blessing, it would have been worth all my time." Soto-Albrecht said: "The final ritual [showed] us how emotionally heavy their hearts were. You can see it in their faces when we're leading ... you can see how this material is touching them and working in them."

There are several upcoming Sister Care International seminars where co-presenters Heggen and Rhoda Keener will share Sister Care: in August they'll present in Paraguay and Argentina; in October they'll lead in Ontario, and in November they'll present it in Trinidad. Heggen and Soto-Albrecht will co-lead Sister Care in Cuba in November as well. *—Claire DeBerg of Mennonite Women USA*

MCC helps respond to flooding in the Balkans

Partners in Bosnia and Serbia and Herzegovina work on an emergency response.

Matthew Sawatzky

Davor Majstorović, left, coordinator of the Trauma Centre at Mennonite Central Committee partner Bread of St. Anthony, with Miriam Regier, a SALT volunteer placed with Bread of St. Anthony in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

When three months of rain fell in only three days in mid-May and caused severe flooding, Serbia as well as Bosnia and Herzegovina declared states of emergency, and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) quickly began working on its disaster response.

More than 40 people have died, hundreds are injured and hundreds of thousands more were forced to evacuate. With the displacement and lack of access to water and electricity, more than 3 million people have been affected.

"This is all very stressful, and people are extremely frustrated since the water is still decreasing very slowly," said Davor Majstorović on May 26. As coordinator of the Trauma Centre at Bread of St. Anthony, an MCC partner, he added, "Water surrounding houses is also very dirty and poses a direct threat to health."

The United Nations has identified water, sanitation and hygiene items as high priorities, as well as food for children under 5 years old in displaced families.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, MCC is providing funds for a one-time distribution of food and water purification supplies to 5,000 people affected by flooding in Sarajevo. In northeastern Bosnia, 400 children under 3 years old will receive baby food, baby bottles and clean water. MCC is also sending containers of blankets, dried soup mix, hygiene kits, relief kits, infant care kits and school kits. MCC partners Merhamet and Bread of St. Anthony will distribute the supplies.

In Serbia, MCC partner Bread of Life Belgrade is providing 100 displaced families with emergency food packages as well as 100 baby supplies with food and diapers to children under 3 years old.

In addition to food and water concerns, landslides in Bosnia and Herzegovina have dislodged land mines from the civil war in the 1990s. Furthermore, many warning signs around the minefields have been washed away.

The fact that "there have already been victims in this past week from landmine detonation is a sad reminder of the remains of war still in the region," said Ruth Plett, one of MCC's representatives for East Europe. "It is difficult to consider all those now affected, many of whom experienced war and trauma within their lifetimes, now experiencing trauma, again, due to this disaster." Plett and her spouse, Krystan Pawlikowski, also an MCC representative, are from Kitchener, Ont.

People may give at donate.mcc.org/project/balkans-flooding, call 888-563-4676 or send donations to MCC U.S., 21 S. 12th St., Akron, PA 17501, specifying "Balkans Flooding."

MCC also requests hygiene kits, mcc.org/kits/hygiene, and relief kits, mcc.org/kits/relief.—*Emily Loewen of MCC Canada*

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Celebration marks change at AMBS Great Plains

AMBS–Kansas Center to announce new coordinator soon

Vada Snider

Former directors of the Great Plains Conference-based Theological Education program joined those who celebrated the closing-yet-ongoing celebration of the AMBS extension site: Floyd Bartel, Jacob T. Friesen and Dorothea (Dotty) Janzen.

To deal with the winds of change, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary is closing its Great Plains Extension in North Newton, Kan. It is being replaced by options that are responding to the needs of today's theological students and to fresh breezes of the Spirit, according to Sara Wenger Shenk, AMBS president.

In a "closing yet ongoing" celebration, the AMBS community gathered June 1 at Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton for a worship service and reception. Current and past administrators, professors and students and other guests marked the transition with reflections, responsive Scripture readings, hymn-singing and special music.

The celebration marked the birth of the Great Plains Seminary Education Program in 1980. Wenger Shenk and Rebecca Slough, AMBS academic dean, called the reconfiguration of AMBS–Great Plains into AMBS–Kansas Center a time for renewal rather than regret.

The change, fueled in part by declining enrollment, is replacing a full roster of on-site courses each semester with the offering of just one class each semester. This is in conjunction with the main AMBS campus in Elkhart, Ind., offering new online and hybrid course options.

The process of training leaders for God's reconciling mission is changing, said AMBS–Great Plains interim director Dorothy Nickel Friesen. Her charge was to conduct an in-depth assessment of the extension site during the last six months of 2013.

"In the late 1970s, there were no graduate theological centers of training within miles of central Kansas, which made an extension site a great idea," she said in a late May interview. "In 2014, a graduate education in theology is available at anyone's computer and is offered at many other centers close by."

Slough helped honor many who have been part of the conference-based and seminary extension program in central Kansas. Eighty-two professors taught at least one course through the 34-year history, Slough said, including five core adjunct faculty members: Duane Friesen, Keith Harder, Patty Shelly, Cynthia Neufeld Smith and Jerry Truex. Thirty-eight people served on the advisory board for AMBS–Great Plains. Marlene Faul gave administrative support for more than nine years and Lois Barrett served as director of the extension site from 2002 until 2013.

Members of the administrative team for AMBS–Kansas Center and the coordinator will be announced soon. For more information about courses and other offerings go to www.ambs.edu/kansascenter.—*Laurie Oswald Robinson for AMBS*

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MCC helps prepare young Gazan leaders

Youth in Gaza develop their leadership skills and strengthen their education.

Twelve-year-old Siraa Moghrabi crouches beside student after student, helping the 6- and 7-year-olds and their mothers arrange flowers on their art projects. Moghrabi dreams of being a teacher some day and in many ways is already becoming one.

Moghrabi is growing in her understanding of what it means to be a leader through experience and also through leadership training. "Leadership means feeling responsible, to be confident, to be brave, to think creatively," she says.

Moghrabi is a leader at Shoroq wa-Amal (Sunrise and Hope) Children's Center of the Culture and Free Thought Association in the Gaza Strip. A Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) partner, CFTA operates three centers that run arts, drama, education, sports and other programs.

Leadership training is integrated into the centers' activities, which provide opportunities for learning and expression for Gazan children and their young leaders. Many children at CFTA have been traumatized by violence and bombings they have witnessed because of fighting between Israel and Gaza.

Dan Bergen, an MCC representative for Palestine and Israel, says CFTA believes the leadership program that trains youth such as Moghrabi instills a strong sense of confidence and positive interaction with peers and provides a basis for coping with the stress that accompanies those trying to live under siege. Bergen and his spouse, Joanna Hiebert Bergen, also an MCC representative, are from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Some of the youth, including Moghrabi, become leaders when their peers elect them. Others work their way up to leadership programs through CFTA's passport program for teens ages 13-17.

At CFTA's Bunat Al Ghad (Builders of the Future) Center, the youth can earn a passport resembling an official document. Getting a passport—even an unofficial one—is meaningful to them because few Gazans have the chance to use passports, due to border closures by Israel and Egypt.

To use their passport, the youth apply what they learn in school by planning and participating in 10 activities, including science experiments, educational workshops and even talent shows. After they earn a green passport, they can earn a blue or red passport with leadership activities.

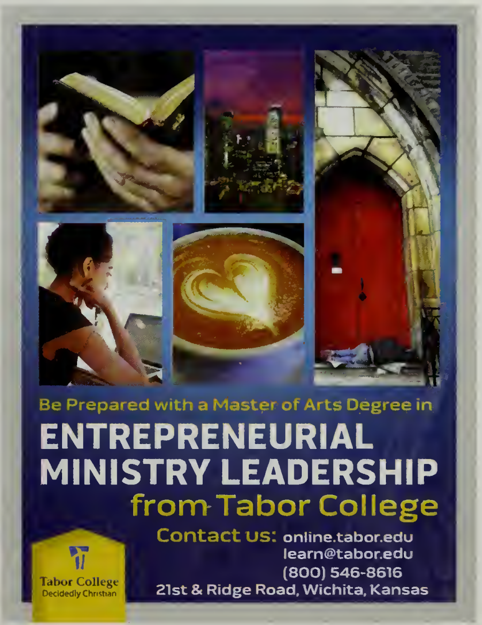
Young leaders with green passports receive leadership skills training and participate in activities planned by administrators and other young leaders. Those with blue passports receive advanced leadership skills training and are leaders at part of the center. Those with red passports are part of the leadership committee.

With his previous passport, Al Masri planned a workshop for children on the negative effects of smoking. He invited a doctor to speak and the children's parents to attend. He is organizing a talent show with two other leaders. He is eager to see other children show their talents in singing, beatboxing (vocal percussion) and theater.

Walid Nabahin, monitoring and evaluating officer at CFTA, says the passport program allows the young leaders "to feel responsible, build their confidence and give back to the community. And they can have a passport like many other people in the world."

Moghrabi isn't a participant in the passport program; she designed her own election campaign and competed for votes from other youth. In 2011, Moghrabi's peers elected her to be a first-time leader and in 2013 to be the primary leader of CFTA's summer camp. She is also a leader at her school's library and at home. She helps some of her siblings—four boys and five girls altogether—study for school in the evenings. When her mother is not home, she often dresses her kindergarten-age brother and prepares him for school.

"Being a leader at CFTA has increased my desire to be a leader in other parts of my life now and my desire to be a leader in the future," she said.—*Sheldon C. Good of MCC*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Two conventions in 2015

What you need to know about MWC assembly and Kansas City 2015

Get ready for a busy July in 2015. The Mennonite Church USA convention in Kansas City, Mo., is scheduled for June 30-July 5, and the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) Assembly in Harrisburg, Pa., for July 21-26. These two gatherings are only 16 days apart. Both conventions' planners hope that Mennonite Church USA members are able to attend both, but for many people a decision must be made. Here is information about the conventions to help inform your decision.

Why are these two gathering being held so close together?

There is a lot of history behind these decisions. In 2010, when MWC made the decision to hold its assembly in the United States, Mennonite Church USA had already signed contracts to meet in Kansas City, Mo., in 2015. To withdraw from these contracts would have resulted in significant financial penalties.

At that time, leaders from Mennonite Church USA and MWC had several conversations about how to best work at facilitating two major conferences so close together. Mennonite Church USA invited MWC to think about a joint gathering. MWC leaders felt that doing so would feel exclusive to other MWC members, since Mennonite Church USA is only one of the members represented in MWC. Mennonite Church USA leaders suggested having the youth join the MWC Assembly, but it became clear that MWC would not be able to accommodate the large numbers of youth who usually attend the Mennonite Church USA convention, in addition to other assembly attendees.

Although planners are hosting two separate gatherings, Glen Guyton, director of convention planning for Mennonite Church USA, and Liesa Unger, special event coordinator for MWC, have been working together to find ways to collaborate in order to assure that both events are meaningful and well attended.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Which one should I attend?

Both. Mennonite Church USA convention planning and MWC are working together to identify incentives, and they hope to offer discounts for individuals who are able to attend both of these summer events. MWC has stated clearly that they do not have the capacity to host a full-fledged event for youth. The Global Youth Summit, which will occur prior to the MWC Assembly, is for young adults, ages 18 and older. High school age youth will have morning activities at the MWC Assembly but will otherwise be expected to join the overall adult programming. The Mennonite Church USA convention will continue to offer full-fledged programming for people of all ages.

Why should I attend Kansas City 2015?

Faith formation: Conventions are not only a fun place t hang out with friends but also a place where lives are transformed. Each year after convention, our inboxes are full of stories from youth and adults who felt called to commit themselves to walking alongside Christ, either for the first time or again. We also hear from people who are rejuvenate and re-energized to live out their call.

The development of Mennonite identity: The People in the Pew study, which surveyed leaders and people across Mennonite Church USA, showed a clear correlation betwee attending a convention and making a commitment to being an active participant in the church. Convention is also a place where people can catch a glimpse of the diversity that exists among Mennonites in the United States.

Networking and fellowship: Convention is a time to meet new friends, mentors and co-workers as well as visit with old friends.

Opportunities for learning: At each convention, we di deep into a theme and into Scripture, and we offer workshops that provide education and open up space for conversation around pressing issues in the church.

Opportunity to be a part of decision-making: Delegates play an important role, representing their congregations and participating in discussing resolutions and discerning the way forward for Mennonite Church USA.

Interact with Mennonite Church USA agencies and colleges: The exhibit hall at convention provides a chance to get a snapshot of the good work that agencies and educational institutions across Mennonite Church USA are doing, and to learn how to get involved.—*Mennonite Church USA*

Mennonites participated in a prayer walk at Phoenix 2013.

Mennonite Church USA: Kansas City 2015 facts

Will Kansas City 2015 be different from past conventions? Although we always strive to improve convention and to include new elements, you should still expect to come to convention and experience energetic worship, meaningful and engaging seminars, delegate sessions to discuss resolutions and issues impacting the church, special events and more. We are hoping the Mennonite Church USA convention will also have a bit more of a global flavor, as we host guests from around the world who are coming to the United States to attend both our gathering and Mennonite World Conference.

Theme: "On the Way/En el Camino." The theme Scripture for the week is Luke 24, a passage that includes the stories of the women finding Jesus' empty tomb, the disciples' encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus and Jesus' ascension and commissioning of the disciples.

Dates: June 30-July 5, 2015

Location: Kansas City, Mo., at the Kansas City Convention Center: http://www.kcconvention.com/

Frequency: Mennonite Church USA plans conventions every two years. The 2017 convention will be in Orlando, and the 2019 convention back in Kansas City.

Registration cost: Adults $229; Youth $229; Jr. Youth (includes program and full meal) $399; Children K-5 $150; Preschool $130. Registration begins Jan. 15, 2015.

Lodging: Hotels near the Kansas City Convention Center

Meals: Meals will be offered at the convention center. You can find prices on the registration website.

Youth/children events: Kansas City 2015 will include full-fledged programming for people of all ages.

Volunteers: Convention planning provides three categories (coordinators, associates and daily volunteers), with differing expectations and time commitments. Some roles start many months prior to convention, while others start when you arrive at the convention. Go here for more information and to apply: http://convention.mennoniteusa.org/registration/volunteer/.—*Mennonite Church USA*

The 'fake family': In 1997, several people in another Mennonite office decided to play a joke on the registrar. The jokesters prepared a fake registration for Mennonite Church USA Convention Orlando 1997 for Pat and Lee Schmeltz.

This fake couple planned to bring their fake twins and their fake Canadian brother-in-law to convention.

The registration form had every error a registrar has ever complained about: misspellings, outlandish special requests, calculation errors, payments in foreign currency, and the list went on.

Soon after the registration form arrived in our office, the registrar got a call from Mrs. Schmeltz (i.e., one of the jokesters). (At the same time, I was on the other line with the other jokester, providing information from our office.)

Scott Hartman

Mrs. Schmeltz needed to cancel the registration for the twins because they had passed away. The registrar handled the call delicately, despite several awkward statements by Mrs. Schmeltz.

At the end of the call, Mrs. Schmeltz revealed the joke to the registrar. Everyone laughed and laughed.

Days later, a picture of the Schmeltz family showed up in our office with the twins missing. Our office sent cards of condolence to the Schmeltz family. The joke continued for several months, with pictures surfacing from gravesides and family reunions.

Eventually, other Mennonite agencies got involved in the fun.

During some of the most stressful parts of the convention planning process, we found an opportunity to have a bit of fun.—*Scott Hartman, convention planning coordinator*

Merle Good

From left: A woman from the Bruderhof, Janti Widjaja and Paulus Widjaja (both from Indonesia) fellowship at the Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Paraguay in 2009.

What is the Mennonite World Conference Assembly?

A reunion of the Anabaptist-Mennonite family worldwide, usually held every six years, meeting on one of the major five continents on a rotating basis. Attendees engage in fellowship, worship, service and witness.

Who is included in Mennonite World Conference?

· 1.3 million baptized members of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches around the world. (There are a total of 1.7 million in the family, but not all are MWC members.)

· 101 national conferences (about 9,500 congregations)

· located in 57 countries

· 78 percent of baptized believers in MWC member churches are African, Asian or Latin American.

Why should I attend?

1. Because this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience worship with our global Anabaptist family on our own continent. (If the MWC Assemblies continue to be held every six years, rotating among the five major continents, it will be another 30 years before the Assembly comes back to North America.)

2. Because it is relatively inexpensive to attend, compared with the next Assembly, scheduled for 2021 in Indonesia.

3. Because it will be global and colorful, full of character, stories and inspiration, even though it is in the United States.

4. And mostly because worship with our sisters and brothers from all over the world will feed and nourish our souls and faith for years to come. This will be an experience of Jesus that we cannot fully replicate in our own congregations or denominations, a taste of heaven as we worship the Lamb of God in many languages and cultures.

5. Because all of us who are members of the Body of Christ will learn about how to be more faithful Christ-followers today, as we fellowship and worship together.

6. Because we will all be encouraged and have our hopes renewed by engaging with individuals from our global family many of whom live in inhospitable settings.

I'd like to be a host family. What do I do?

You can be a host family for MWC Assembly if you live within one hour or less of the Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex. You are responsible to give your guest(s) a bed, breakfast and transportation to and from a local shuttle bus point. Hosts will receive a small compensation for this. Planners will send out more information at a later point regardin transportation and other details as they are worked out. We anticipate that the shuttle bus meeting point will be within 15 minutes of your home and that hosts may also use these shuttle buses as space permits. Go here for an application: www.mwc-cmm.org/article/host-family-application.—*Phyllis Pellman Good for Mennonite World Conference.*

—*Compiled by Anna Grof*

Mennonite World Conference: Assembly 2015 facts

Pennsylvania
2015

Theme: "Walking with God." Speakers each morning and evening will work with biblical texts and our own stories and experiences of joy and grief, uncertainty and hope.

Dates: July 21-26, 2015, Tuesday afternoon through Sunday morning

Location: The Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex and Expo Center in Harrisburg, Pa. This is close to the large Pennsylvania Mennonite and Brethren in Christ (BIC) communities of Lancaster, Grantham, Chambersburg and Franconia. And it's an easy drive from Philadelphia, central Pennsylvania and the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

Frequency: MWC Global Assemblies are reunions of the Anabaptist-Mennonite family worldwide and take place every six years. It's the first time the event will be held in the eastern United States in MWC's 90-year history. The Assembly was last in the United States in 1978 in Wichita, Kan.

Registration costs: Registration with a full meal plan for an adult from the Global North will be roughly $575; for participants from the Global South, roughly $90. Family discounts and sponsorships will be available. Registration begins this August.

Lodging: Hotel prices are $109-$159/night; dorms at local colleges are $42-45/person per night, and homes are $25/person per night. Shuttle service will be arranged from hotels, dormitories and meeting points for home stays.

Travel: Harrisburg International Airport is the closet airport, but other options include Philadelphia, Baltimore/D.C. and New York. A train system connects most of these cities. Shuttle buses will be arranged from major airports to the assembly site.

Youth events: PA 2015 will include a children's program. After morning singing, children will experience their own multicultural program all day, including lunch. PA 2015 will also include a youth program (ages 18 and under). After morning singing, youth will meet for their own presentations, discussions and service projects. They'll join the adults for workshops, sports, tours, music and relaxing in the Global Church Village.

Young adult: An international young adult convention, the Global Youth Summit (ages 18+), will take place July 17-19, three days before PA 2015. It will be held at Messiah College, Mechanicsburg, Pa., just across the river from Harrisburg. Its theme is "Called to Share: My Gifts, Our Gifts."

Format: Each day will begin with singing, led by a multinational worship team, with music from all continents. Each morning, one of MWC's four Commissions (Faith and Life, Missions, Peace and Deacons) will present, and a young adult, selected by the Young Anabaptist group, will respond. Everyone attending will join a small multicultural group of 15-20 people for fellowship and a deeper discussion on the morning theme. The same groups will continue to meet throughout the week—a great opportunity for visiting and discovering new relationships. Afternoons will be filled with workshops, service opportunities, local tours, sports activities, and performances and exhibits in the Global Church Village. Each continent will contribute to each evening worship service, which will include testimonies, singing, prayer and times of encouragement.

Volunteer opportunity: Volunteers are needed and sign-up went online in September 2013. Volunteers will receive a reduced rate. Go to www.mwc-cmm.org for more information.

How can you get updates about the Assembly?—Go to mwc-cmm.org/pa2015 and Facebook.com/MennoniteWorldConference.

Registration: Opens on Aug. 20. Go to mwc-cmm.org/pa2015 for registration materials.

WORKERS

Delp, Chelsea, was licensed as Minister of Children and Youth at East Petersburg Mennonite Church, East Petersburg, Pa., on April 27.

Rodriguez, Bernardo, was licensed as co-pastor of Iglesia Cristiana Valle de Jesus, Brooklyn, N.Y., on May 2.

Rodriguez, Linda, was licensed as co-pastor of Iglesia Cristiana Valle de Jesus, Brooklyn, N.Y., on May 2.

Shertzer, A. Willard, was installed as intentional interim pastor of Erb Mennonite Church, Lititz, Pa., on May 4.

OBITUARIES

Aeschliman, Waldo Lee, 79, Archbold, Ohio, died June 1. Spouse: Barbara Nafziger Aeschliman. Parents: Benjamin and Mary Aeschliman. Children: Terry, Max, JoAnn Short; seven grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 8 at Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold.

Burkholder, Anna Mary, 95, Stuarts Draft, Va., died April 29. Parents: Alpheus F. and Mary S. Berry Burkholder. Funeral: May 4 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va.

Campbell, Eva Marie Thompson, 69, Stuarts Draft, Va., died April 7. Spouse: Richard Campbell. Spouse: James Thompson. Parents: Theodore R. and Elsie Bryant Thompson. Children: David White, Elsie Marie White, Tammy Woodson, Reevie White, Lori Ann Almond, Donnie Dalton, Richard Lee Campbell. Funeral: April 11 at Augusta Memorial Park, Waynesboro, Va.

Friesen, Susanne M., 79, Goshen, Ind., died May 22. Parents: Adolf and Susie Unrau Friesen. Funeral: May 27 at Eighth Street Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Good, Lila Esther Birky, 93, Kouts, Ind., and Sarasota, Fla., died Feb. 28. Spouse: Wilmer Martin Good (deceased). Parents: Jonas and Elizabeth Schantz Birky. Children: Ronald, Shirley Good, Mark, Steven, Arlan; eight grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 5 at Hopewell Mennonite Church, Kouts. Memorial service: April 28 at Bahia Vista Mennonite Church, Sarasota.

Hershey, Paul Burkhart, 81, Harrisonburg, Va., died May 20. Spouse: Mary Elaine Moore Hershey. Parents: John K. and Anna Ruth Burkhart Hershey. Children: Debra Bontrager, Sandra Kauffman, Beth Reigner; eight grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 26 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Hofer, Sarah Mendel, 84, Freeman, S.D., died April 13. Spouse: LeRoy D. Hofer. Parents: Jacob H. and Sarah Wollman Mendel. Children: Carlos, Bruce, Geraldina Palumbo, Stanley; eight grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 19 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Huber, Daniel Arthur, 95, Harrisonburg, Va., died April 13. Spouse: Ella Coffman Huber. Spouse: Welby Mae Harner Huber (deceased). Parents: Joseph E. and Emma L. Burkholder Huber. Children: Randal Lee, Kathryn Sue Huber, Larry Duane; five grandchildren; four step-grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 18 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va.

Landis, Roy S., 76, Blooming Glen, Pa., died May 29. Spouse: Joan Y. Derstine Landis. Parents: Ephraim and Mamie Stover Landis. Children: Cynthia Mast, Michael; two grandchildren. Funeral: June 8 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church.

Lapp, Ben F., 82, Watsontown, Pa., died May 23, of a stroke. Spouse: Geraldine A. Derstine Lapp. Parents: Henry S. and Katie Lapp. Children: Karen Bowman, Joyce Lawler, Phil, Steven, Elaine Esch, Mark; 12 grandchildren. Funeral: May 26 at Community Mennonite Fellowship, Milton, Pa.

Loepp, Franzie L., 74, of Normal, Ill., passed away surrounded by family on May 18 at OSF Richard L. Owens Hospice Home in Peoria, Ill. Franzie was born June 17, 1939, in Liberal, Kan., a son to Franzie P. and Leona Dirks Loepp. He married Dorothy Harms at the Grace Hill Mennonite Church in Whitewater KS, on May 29, 1961. He is survived by his wife Dorothy (Harms) Loepp of Normal, his mother Leona (Dirks Loepp of Liberal KS, his son Leroy Loepp of Normal, his daughter Susan Loepp of Williamstown MA, and his brother Dennis and wife Dori Loepp of Turpin Okla. Franzie was preceded in death by his father Franzie P. Loepp. Franzie earned his doctorate degree from the University of Northern Colorado, and joined the Department of Industrial Technology at Illinois State University in 1970. He enjoyed teaching introductory level laboratory courses, educational methods classes, and he loved supervising student teachers. His research focused on curriculum development for integrated science, mathematics and technology in middle schools, and was funded in part with grants from the Illinois Department of Education and the National

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Science Foundation. He went on to serve as the chairperson of the Industrial Technology Department for six years (1990-1996) and then as Director of the Center for Mathematics, Science and Technology until his retirement in 2003 as a Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Illinois State University. Franzie was devoted to helping others. He was an active member of Mennonite Church of Normal, where he played a vital role in the actual construction of the building in 1980. He gave leadership in many situations involving volunteers, and was known for his gift of bringing out the best in others. He volunteered twice weekly with Habitat for Humanity, and served on many Mennonite Disaster Service project sites, where he helped to repair and rebuild homes damaged by natural disasters. Franzie took a keen interest in the well-being of the wider Mennonite Church, most recently serving as a board member of the Mennonite Education Agency. In his spare time, he loved to bike and to work in his shop on woodworking projects. Funeral services were held June 2 at Mennonite Church of Normal, Normal, Ill.

Musselman, Kathryn Y. Erb, 85, Harleysville, Pa., died May 6. Spouse: Harold H. Musselman (deceased). Parents: Linford and Katie Young Erb. Children: Susan Moyer, David, Laurie Mason, H. Brent; 12 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 10 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville.

Noll, Verna M. Good, 79, Manheim, Pa., died April 27. Spouse: Grant G. Noll (deceased). Parents: Paul B. and Elsie Haldeman Good. Children: Beth A. Lehman, Grant Christopher; five grandchildren. Funeral: May 1 at Pleasant View Retirement Community, Manheim.

Stogdale, Anne Jacqueline Yancey, 85, Waynesboro, Va., died March 16. Spouse: William W. Stogdale (deceased). Parents: John and Maggie Yancey. Children: John William, Michael Ray; three grandchildren. Funeral: March 22 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro.

Summers, Ida M. Arment Stoltzfus, 92, Gap, Pa., died May 6, of heart failure. Spouse: Leon Summers (deceased). Spouse: Steven K. Stoltzfus (deceased). Parents: Ralph and Lizzie Martin Arment. Children: Anna Mary Boettger, Jean Hoover, Rosella Coblentz, Galen Stoltzfus, Steven Stoltzfus, Virginia Ann Stoltzfus; step-children: Leon Summers, Jr., Nevin Summers, Cathy Miller, Nancy Garris; 13 grandchildren; eight step-grandchildren; 38 great-grandchildren; one step-great-grandchild; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 10 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Atglen, Pa.

Unruh, Douglas LaMonte, 59, Perryton, Texas, died March 27. Spouse: Patsy King Unruh. Parents: Eli and Marge Holdeman Unruh. Children: Monte, Lisa Beun, C.J. Byler; four grandchildren. Funeral: April 1 at Perryton Mennonite Church.

Yoder, Hobert D., 81, Iowa City, Iowa, died April 27. Spouse: Lois Yoder Yoder. Parents: Ray A. and Kathryn P. Miller Yoder. Children: Libby Hochstetler, DeVon; four grandchildren. Funeral: May 10 at First Mennonite Church, Iowa City.

Yoder, Mary Schrock, 74, Middlebury, Ind., died May 10. Spouse: Ray Yoder. Parents: David and Mattie Schrock. Children: Laurie Mast, Len; two grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 13 at Holdeman Mennonite Church, Wakarusa, Ind.

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Bethany Christian Schools, Goshen, Ind., is seeking a **head of school** to lead a private Christian school that provides Christian education to about 280 students in grades 4-12. Bethany Christian Schools is a dynamic learning community that integrates faith development with academic excellence. Grounded in Mennonite values, Bethany equips students for Christian discipleship in the church and around the world. Qualified candidates must have prior experience in school administration and organizational leadership, preferably in a senior administrative position, with church school experience. A master's degree in education from an accredited college or university is required. The candidate must have or be able to obtain an Indiana Building Level Administrator License prior to starting this job. Qualified candidates must possess proven skills in leading educational institutions while exhibiting a passion for entrepreneurial pedagogy and administration. The candidate must have a mature, growing commitment to Jesus Christ. The candidate must be a contributing participant in the mission of their congregation and must have a commitment to Anabaptist-Mennonite belief and practice. Cover letter and resume may be sent to: Kirk Stiffney, 1114 N. Main St., Goshen, IN 46528; 574-537-8736; Kirk@stiffneygroup.com.

East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church seeks **full-time associate pastor**. Our 162-member congregation in Lancaster City, Pa., attracts children, youth, young adults, adults, families and seniors. Members are involved in our neighborhood, Lancaster County Council of Churches, Lancaster Mennonite Conference, Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite World Conference. Many of us serve in business, church agencies and various professions. Our congregation seeks to be transformed by God's mercy, grace and love; to introduce our children and neighbors to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior; to equip one another to live peaceably and generously and to contribute to the well-being of Lancaster City and the wider world. We seek an associate pastor to provide spiritual leadership for our children, youth and young adult ministries, to help us to connect with our surrounding neighborhood and community, to provide pastoral care, to preach monthly and to nurture a personal relationship with God. The ideal candidate for this position will have an Anabaptist perspective, seminary degree and, preferably, congregational leadership experience. For information, please contact search committee chair Harley Kooker (hmkooker1@epix.net) or Lancaster District Overseer and search committee member Jason Kuniholm (jkuniholm@gmail.com).

The Mennonite Church of Argentina invites U.S. congregations to explore a new **mission partnership with the congregatio in Buenos Aires**, in the central region of Argentina. **Mennonit Mission Network** invites interested congregations to contact Partnership@MennoniteMission.net or call Dean Heisey at 866-866-2872, ext. 23085 (toll-free, direct).

Calling all artists. Greencroft Goshen is requesting proposals from artists (any medium) who would suggest ways to use a to honor two sets of donors on the Greencroft Goshen campus. Budget is up to $20,000. Deadline for RFPs is Aug. 1. One donor recognition piece would have the names of 90 donors but would need to be expandable. A second donor recognition piece would be static (permanent) with 460 names. For the complete specs o these projects, contact JimN@greencroft.org.

Explore God's love with the new **Shine Sunday school curriculum**! *Shine: Living in God's Light* has engaging stories and activities that will teach children the Bible, understand that they are known and loved by God, and learn what it means to follow Jesus. Find sample sessions, Bible outlines and more at www.shinecurriculum.com.

Mennonite Central Committee leadership openings in Latin America/Caribbean: **area director for Central America/Hait** and **MCC Haiti representative**. Resume and letter of intent due Aug. 15, 2014. More information at serve.mcc.org or 717-85 1151.

Eastern Mennonite University is seeking applicants for the following positions:

A **full-time director of career services** in the department o Student Life. The director of career services provides leadership and direction to a comprehensive career-development program that includes but is not limited to: career counseling for choosing/changing majors and alumni career changers; assistance wit resumes, cover letters, interview preparation; searching for jobs/i ternships/service opportunities; graduate school preparation; programming; online resources; classroom workshops, selected care and academic testing services. Experience in providing career counseling and services for a collegiate and/or scholastic population or equivalent; skills in interpersonal and group communication; evidence of knowledge of college student development; an administrative competence. Master's degree required. Must be committed to and supportive of the mission and policies of Eastern Mennonite University. Start date around July 15. Submit appl cation, curriculum vitae and three references to: Dr. Ken L. Nafziger, VP for Student Life, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802, stulifesearch@emu.edu. For more information visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanresources. Persons who bring di versity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

An **associate provost** to provide leadership for academic programming at its Lancaster, Pa., instructional site. EMU at Lancast offers an MA in education, an M.Div. program in pastoral studies, an RN-BSN degree-completion program in nursing, several certificate programs and an array of undergraduate general education courses. The associate provost will be responsible for overseeing the marketing and delivery of the various EMU at Lancaster programs. He/she will also provide strategic leadership for growing current programs and developing new programs. The associate provost will supervise a director of operations, a marketing associate and administrative staff. He/she will provide coordination and oversight of academic program directors in collaboration with the respective academic deans on EMU's main campus in Harrisonburg, Va. We seek candidates with successful academic and administrative leadership experience at the university level, knowledge of the Pennsylvania context and constituents, affinity with the Mennonite faith tradition, and commitment to the mission of Mennonite/Anabaptist higher education as practiced at Eastern Mennonite University. A Ph.D. or other relevant terminal degree is highly preferred. Applications will be considered beginning June 15 and continue until the position is filled. Applicants should submit a letter of application, a short narrative statement of vision for EMU at Lancaster programs, a current CV and a list of references. Submit materials electronically to Dr. Fred Kniss, Provost, at provost@emu.edu. Eastern Mennonite University is an equal opportunity employer, committed to enhancing diversity across the institution.

A **lab coordinator** in the Department of Biology/Chemistry. Primary responsibilities of the lab manager are to oversee technical work in the science laboratories, primarily related to class-associated laboratory activities. Activities include setup and cleanup of class exercises, equipment maintenance, and keeping supplies well stocked, and other laboratory curricular needs. The laboratory manager recruits, trains and supervises work-study students. Previous experience in biology, biochemistry and chemistry laboratories, including equipment operation, basic maintenance and preparation of regents desired. Previous safety knowledge and/or experience including knowledge and use of material safety data sheets and working with potentially hazardous materials ideal. Bachelor's degree in a field of science required. Position is ¾-time with benefits. Submit application, resume and contract information for three references to: hr@emu.edu. For more information visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanresources. Persons who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Are you the one God has been preparing for us? **Fairview Mennonite Church** is seeking a **full-time lead pastor**. Located in rural northern Michigan, with weekly attendance around 100, the heart of FMC's vision is to build relationships in the community that meet people's needs. If you are interested exploring possibilities at Fairview Mennonite Church, please email the search committee at fmcpastorsearch@gmail.com or call Don Haskin at 989-335-3153.

RESOURCES

John XXIII: A Saint for the Modern World by Lucinda M. Vardey (Paulist Press, 2014, $4.95) outlines the life of John XXIII from his humble background to his election as Pope. It highlights the contribution he made to the Catholic Church and includes a brief summary of the Second Vatican Council.

The Vision of Saint John XXIII by Randall Rosenberg (Paulist Press, 2014, $14.95) outlines the spirituality of John XXIII and guides readers into the movements of John XXIII's heart and mind as he made his journey from a simple and devotional home in northern Italy to become one of the most remarkable popes of the 20th century.

The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years by Steven P. Miller (Oxford University Press, 2014, $24.95) chronicles the place and meaning of evangelical Christianity in America since 1970, a time of evangelical scares, born-again spectacles and battles over faith in the public square.

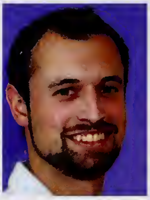
Ellie: Book One, Ellie's People by Mary Christner Borntrager (Herald Press, 2014, $8.99) is a new edition with updated language for today's reader. It is a novel about Ellie Maust, a young Old Order Amish girl in the early 1900s. For ages 10 and up.

Dancing Standing Still: Healing the World from a Place of Prayer by Richard Rohr (Paulist Press, 2014, $14.95) is a new edition of *A Lever and a Place to Stand*. It offers a critique of religion as a system that often creates an alternative, pious world without really challenging oppression, materialism and sectarianism in our modern world.

Extending the Table: Revised Edition: A World Community Cookbook by Joetta Handrich Schlabach (Herald Press, 2014, $24.99) is a revised edition of the popular cookbook that first came out in 1991 and has sold about 122,000 copies. Commissioned by Mennonite Central Committee, it sought to promote global understanding and celebrate the variety of world cultures. The new edition contains more color photographs and new recipes as well as reader-selected favorites. It also contains prayers and many stories of hunger, hospitality, generosity, stewardship and celebration—often in the midst of few material resources.

Openings: A Daybook of Saints, Sages, Psalms and Prayer Practices by Larry J. Peacock (SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2014, $18.99) is a prayer book for every day of the year that draws on a wide variety of resources—lives of saints and sages from every age, psalms, guides for personal reflection and suggestions for practice—and offers helpful guidance for anyone hungry for a richer prayer life.

Integrate youth into the life of the church



Jon Heinly is former youth minister for Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference and Lancaster Mennonite Schools. He can be reached at jheinly@lancasterconference.org.

The reality of leaving was gradually sinking in. I was coming to the end of my last year working as youth minister for Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite School before beginning full-time seminary study. Our faculty gathered for our annual year-end lunch, where faculty members are acknowledged who are not returning for the next year. I noticed a pattern developing. Each of us had started our professional careers within this very school, from one to 36 years ago. Several of us expressed gratitude for the people and the institution that gave us the chance to grow and learn. Giving opportunities to new leaders is risky, but our school had repeatedly shown the courage to hire young adults—some, like myself, fresh out of college.

This came on the heels of a recent conversation in which I was reminded of an opportunity I was given to share in a Mennonite Church USA delegate session. I was attending convention as a teenager and was invited to participate in a panel presentation about my call to ministry and the support I had received from my parents and my congregation.

With these experiences as a backdrop, there are two things I desire to do in this article. First, I want to express gratitude to those who have supported me in the development of my gifts. Second, I want my experience to challenge all of us to be courageous enough to integrate youth into the life and ministry of our churches.

The old expression says, "It takes a village to raise a child." I believe it also takes a village to raise an effective leader. Multiple youth ministry scholars, including Kenda Creasy Dean, have noted that a major factor in faith retention among young adults is the experience of significant relationships with at least five adults during their teenage years. Certainly this is even more important in developing church leaders.

My parents played a crucial role in nurturing my gifts. They have been my most consistent cheerleaders throughout my life, even through my current transition. I also had a congregation full of supportive adults at Mount Joy (Pa.) Mennonite Church—pastors, mentors, Sunday school teachers and youth group sponsors—who provided many words of affirmation as well as opportunities for me to exercise my gifts.

Finally, there were adults with no particular connection to our church's youth ministry who made a point to send me notes of encouragemen tell me they were praying for me or seek me out and greet me on Sunday mornings. This was not only true for me but in the lives of youth who went through the congregation before and after me. The congregation, from leadership to laity, was committed to nurturing its youth. While our congregation maintained an active youth group, youth were no separated out as a church within a church but were integrated into all aspects of the life of the congregation.

How will you call out gifts and give opportunities to the youth in your congregation?

I've learned from the models I had in my high school experience. As a result, I make a point to provide youth with opportunities for leadership and do my best to affirm the gifts I see in them. Involving youth in leadership takes more time and effort than leaving leadership and ministry to the adults in the congregation. It also increases the likelihood that things will be less polished. Youth will make mistakes (perhaps no more often than adults, but may feel less compelled to cover them up).

I also want to express gratitude to pastors who understand the value of integrating youth into th life of the congregation and who partner with bot paid and lay youth ministers to cast a congregational vision that places high value on the role of youth within the church. This involves risk but also leads to a more vibrant congregational life. I desire to be the type of leader who displays the same courage I experienced from those who hire me at Lancaster Mennonite School and Lancaste Conference and who led at Mount Joy Mennonite

With this in mind, I also want to challenge congregations, conferences and our denomination to grow increasingly more intentional about involving youth in significant ways in our shared churc life. It is occurring in many places, as demonstrated by my experience as a youth, but it is an area where we can always grow. So I leave you with this question: How will you call out gifts and give opportunities to the youth in your congregation? TM

Correction: In June's column by Janet Trevino-Elizarraraz, Haiam Shenk's last name should be Shank.

FILM REVIEW

The Immigrant (R) is a portrayal of spiritual and psychological struggle. Just off the ship from Poland in 1921, Ewa falls prey to Bruno, a pimp who forces her to become a prostitute in order to make enough money to gain her sister's freedom from quarantine on Ellis Island. The cinematography and performances are outstanding. It is a powerful film about forgiveness.—*Gordon Houser*

BOOK REVIEWS

Walking Through Fire: Iraqis' Struggles for Justice and Reconciliation by Peggy Faw Gish (Cascade Books, 2013, $28) follows up on her earlier book, *Iraq: A Journey of Hope and Peace,*and relates the stories of Iraqis in the aftermath of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and the ongoing abuses of the Iraqi government. Working with Christian Peacemaker Teams, Gish is on the ground, bearing witness to people's lives, being present with them and crying with them. Relating her own struggles and grief enhances her account.—*gh*

Ordinary Miracles: Awakening to the Holy Work of Parenting by Rachel S. Gerber (Herald Press, 2014, $12.99) juxtaposes the biblical story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus with parenting three young boys. Gerber reflects on experiencing God's presence in those exhausting, disorienting times. The book not only encourages young parents but all of us to look for God's presence in our lives.—*gh*

Instead of Atonement: The Bible's Salvation Story and Our Hope for Wholeness by Ted Grimsrud (Cascade Books, 2013, $22.50) shows that the Bible presents salvation as a gift of God and seeks to "help us break free from the violence that is encouraged by the acceptance of the logic of retribution." Grimsrud shows that the Bible's story of salvation is one of mercy and healing, and he encourages applying such an approach to our criminal justice system.—*gh*

Many choose influential Mennonites

Last month in this column, I reflected on *Time* Magazine's annual list of the 100 most influential people. I asked, Who are the most influential Mennonites?

As of June 2, one week after we posted the question, 28 people had submitted 150 names (some were mentioned more than once). Actually they submitted more names than that, but the list is reserved for (1) Mennonites and (2) those who are living. (We've since received many other submissions. Those aren't counted here.)

In case you're curious, here are the nine individuals (in alphabetical order) who were named more than twice:

- Marion Bontrager
- Rachel Halder
- Joanna Harader
- Hannah Heinzekehr
- Mary Oyer
- John D. Roth
- David Shenk
- Ervin Stutzman
- Ted Swartz

Nineteen others were mentioned twice. A total of 102 names appeared, 66 men and 36 women. (See full list on our website, www.themennonite.org).

In my article I quoted *Time*'s managing editor Nancy Gibbs, who noted that "influential" does not necessarily mean "powerful." She wrote, "Power is a tool, influence is a skill."

Time's list focuses on people who are currently influential. And they don't limit their list to positive influences. Their list included an al-Qaeda leader and the president of North Korea.

My impression of the names of Mennonites submitted to us is that they were all people they felt positive about; some even wrote explanations to that effect.

Nevertheless, there are Mennonites, such as Theda Good, who was named more than once, who are clearly influential but are seen by some in the church as a good influence and some as a bad influence.

The list is also meant to include people who are influential today, not many years ago. Many named people who have been influential but who may not be as well-known today.

I also encouraged people to include people beyond our national borders, as *Time* did. While several Canadians were named, only one person who lives outside North America made the list, and he is in France.

This may reflect an inherent nationalism and/or a lack of awareness of the many influential Mennonites in the global church.

As I anticipated, many people objected to this exercise. Some saw it as competitive. (See the letters on pages 4-5 and 54 for responses to the idea.)

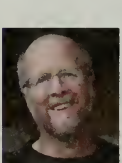
Others said we shouldn't focus on certain people more than others. Some saw it as celebrity worship or another attempt to make ourselves look good in the world.

Regarding that last critique, the list is meant to include Mennonites who are influential in the Mennonite community, not necessarily beyond that.

In a conversation, a friend (who is on the list) said that "Mennonites have a lot trouble talking about power or influence." We like to pretend that it doesn't exist.

But the vast majority of responses we received tended to celebrate those among us who have made our lives better and helped us become better disciples of Jesus Christ.

Because we mentioned a "top 10," some people thought we editors would be choosing "the 10 most influential Mennonites." Sorry. We never intended to do that. I used the number 10 simply to limit the submissions. But as it turns out, we made over 100. TM



Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

ships that advance the discussion in helpful ways; to Mark Thiessen Nation, thanks for your pointed and corrective observations; to Martin Shupack, wow!—*Ryan Ahlgrim, Indianapolis*

I commend *The Mennonite* for printing the articles by Martin Shupack and Mark Thiessen Nation. Shupack's exposition of the two narratives seems fair to both views. Nation's designations "squishy understanding" and "libertarian individualism" are unfair to those who are as committed to biblical authority and correct interpretation as he.

The heart of Nation's argument is that "Jesus and the New Testament as a whole reaffirms [sic] that the vitality of marriage bonds depends on sexual differentiation of male and female." He doesn't show why this is true. Yes, these texts—as does Genesis—speak of marriage between a man and a woman. Reference to a dominant pattern doesn't exclude the possibility of legitimate variations from the norm. Nation's view holds biological structure more determinative of sexual probity than psychological identity. Empirical data—the evidence from God's creation—indicates that identity is more important than body structure in marriage. As has been said, the brain is the largest sexual organ in the body.

Second, Nation equates same-sex desire for fulfillment with heterosexual temptation to immorality. Those of any sexual orientation experience temptations to sin but also experience healthy sexual desire. It is wrong to confuse the two. Paul and Jesus both lift up celibacy as better. It seems to violate Jesus' command to love one's neighbor as one's self while enjoying married life to demand that same-sex oriented singles not marry.

Third, Nation argues that because "Paul's world knew of long-term committed, equal gay and lesbian relationships as well as unequal, abusive ones" this is what Paul addresses in his writings. Various same-sex relationships were known in the Greco-Roman world; careful research suggests none of those was equivalent to marriage in our society of consenting adults who love each other. In Romans 1, Paul addresses sexual practices resulting from idolatry. There are grounds to believe that in 1 Corinthians he has pederasty in mind. Even if one disagrees, as does Nation, it seems dubious to take the harsher stance on shaky exegetical foundations.

In sum, Nation argues that a "one-Jesus narrative" requires compassionate condemnation of same-sex marriage. I agree that Jesus is Lord and that grace requires costly discipleship. I disagree with a different requirement for our LGBT brothers and sisters from what the Lord requires of each of us.—*John M. Miller, Lancaster, Pa.*

Influential Mennonites feedback

I loved Gordon Houser's Mediaculture column about influential Mennonites (June). It is definitely something interesting to think about. The question of top "influencers" could also be applied in individual congregations, given that we need to be aware of who we look to most for leadership, financial support, spiritual advice, etc.—*Breanna Nickel, South Bend, Ind.*

Here's my struggle with even thinking about contributing to the influential Mennonites list. I find that the people that are most influential have been the ones that I've personally worked with because they've been influential for me. I don't presume to have the pulse of the larger community and wouldn't know from that perspective. Also, there are those that have been influential via social media because of the info they pass along—thought-provoking posts they've found and shared. I'm not sure that counts. It's more passive than being an active voice in the community. I wonder if others feel that tension as well. If I lived in one of the Mennonite hub cities, this would be easier to identify. Who are the people other people talk about?—*Janet Lynn Trevino Elizarraraz, San Antonio, Texas*

Although I resonate with some of the comments online that lists exclude an that the greatest among us are the ones who serve (often behind the scenes), still I thought this is a worthwhile project. It is good to have examples to look up to and recognize some who have had a wide influence.—*Joel Shenk, Toledo, Ohio*

Thanks for the opportunity to think o this and to think who in the Mennonit church speaks with wisdom, authority knowledge, is persuasive and compassionate, poses questions in a way that allows others to contemplate more deeply their faith and their way of living. Someone who influences me is a person who makes me a better perso in my community.—*Carol Honderich, Elkhart, Ind.*

In Luke, 9:46, 22:24, Jesus' disciples argue about who among them is to be regarded as the greatest. In both case Jesus' answer upsets conventional hierarchies by citing the child, the youngest, the one who serves at the table. But Jesus' phrasing also sugges that in simply setting up some kind of competition, the disciples are missing what is important—who Jesus is (the child of God, a servant) and what disci pleship is (trying to be like him).

The word "influential" is not amon the first descriptors that come to my mind when I think of discipleship.

Also, I would be more comfortable instead of the competitive idea of mak ing a list of "the most influential Mennonites" the editors simply asked for the names and descriptions of people whose stories would be inspirational otherwise instructive to its readers, e pecially, though not necessarily exclusively, those demonstrating kinds of discipleship that are likely to be overlooked.—*Phyllis Bixler, Bluffton, Ohio*

Editor's note: *To read more about the influential Mennonites list, go to http://www.themennonite.org/issues/17-6/articles/Many_respond_to_question_o _influential_Mennonites.*

Keeping the main thing the main thing

Martha, Martha, the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things. But few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."—Luke 10:41-42 (TNIV)

Jesus loved to spend time with his friends Mary and Martha, who lived in a household with their brother Lazarus.

As the biblical story goes, Martha expressed concern, not only about meal preparation but other things as well. She pressed Jesus to intervene in her differences with her sister Mary, who preferred to sit at the feet of Jesus. I get the impression that Martha's brow was permanently wrinkled, the fruit of undue worry about very legitimate things. Jesus put a different frame around her worries, reminding her of the most important thing.

The story reminds me that I can too readily become occupied by something that doesn't deserve the amount of attention I give it. I may even become distracted by good things that take away my focus from the main thing. When this happens, I become troubled in mind and heart and lose my inner peace.

As Jesus walks among our church gatherings and listens to our conversations during this time of vigorous discussion regarding same-sex marriage, I sense him saying to me: "Ervin, Ervin, you are worried and upset about many things. But few things are needed—or indeed only one." And when I ask him what that "one thing" is, I hear him say, "You can find it in your church's statement of Vision: Healing and Hope: 'God calls us to follow Jesus Christ and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow as communities of grace, joy and peace, so that God's healing and hope flow through us to the world.'"

It reminds me that in the midst of our differences in the church, we must occasionally stop to ponder the main thing that holds us all together—a commitment to be and make disciples of Jesus Christ.

Various stories in Scripture show us that even the most ardent followers of Jesus sometimes had seemingly irresolvable differences. Only by keeping their eye on the most important thing could they find their way forward together.

It brings to mind a sign I once saw hanging on the wall of a friend's office: "The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing." It has become a life principle for me, a mantra I try to follow in my leadership within Mennonite Church USA.

Only by keeping their eye on the most important thing could they find their way forward together.

I know that the things we count as most important will finally shape who we become. Our subconscious minds are like the roots of a tree, out of sight under the surface. Like roots, our minds absorb what they are exposed to, the rich soil of thought patterns that serve as the source of nourishment. The hidden roots eventually produce visible fruit, the actions in our lives that are visible for all to see. I hope our life in Mennonite Church USA will show the fruit that comes from concentration on the life and teaching of our master teacher—Jesus Christ.

Throughout his ministry on earth, Jesus was occupied with one purpose: reaching people with the healing and hope that came through the good news of God's salvation. The Gospels give us glimpses of Jesus ministering in open fields, at the side of a well, on the gentle slope of a mountain, in crowded marketplaces and even in a boat. He seemed equally at home in the public square as in the synagogue or temple. That's a good example for our church.

I hope we can take a lesson from the words of Jesus to Martha, viewing all our goals and worries through the frame of our commitment to Jesus. Let's keep the main thing the main thing. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

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Expecting new love

Anna Groff

My spiritual director suggested I read one Psalm a day, or as regularly as possible. I have read many of the Psalms at some point or another in my life, but a number of the phrases have taken on a fresh meaning as I enter a new chapter of my life. My husband and I are eagerly expecting our first child (a girl) on July 5—just a month away from the time I am writing this.

I found that a lot of Psalms can apply to pregnancy, childbirth and parenting but in new ways for me. I thought of the Psalms when I heard some advice from a friend who is a new mother: "Try to let go of distinguishing day and night."

I take this to mean to care for the baby whenever and sleep whenever—regardless of what the rest of the world is doing or whether or not the sun is out. Psalms that relate include: "I lie down and sleep; I wake again for the Lord sustains me" (3:5), "Yours is the day, yours also is the night" (75:16) and, "You keep my eyelids from closing" (77:4).

It will be important to remember that caring for an infant is a spiritual act.

Another verse reminds me of the connection between God's love and a parent's love—biological or otherwise: "Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother's breast" (Psalm 22:9).

Father Eddie at the Franciscan church we attended while living in Whiteriver, Ariz., often relayed a similar message in his homilies. If you are feeling unworthy of God's love, just remember how much you love your children or grandchildren, he would say. God loves you far more than that.

Furthermore, in one episode of the PBS show "Call the Midwife," a character grieving a loss says, "I didn't realize how much my mum loved me till I was a mum. It's the kind of love that only goes one way—forward."

While I am looking forward to experiencing this new kind of love, I am anxious as my due date approaches. As people tell me—and I readily admit—my life will never be the same.

In this transition time, it will be important to remember that caring for an infant is a spiritual act. My spiritual director said that many young parents came to her when she was a pastor to e press guilt that they didn't have time alone to spend meditating and praying.

She attempted to ease their guilt by telling them, "Caring for a baby can be a spiritual discipline and even prayerful. We don't need to separate baby care from God." That includes the rhythm of changing diapers and breastfeeding. When children are older, it can mean sharing ni prayers or dinner conversations about Scripture

In the June issue of *Sojourners*, editor-in-chief Jim Wallis' main advice on how to further the common good was, "If you are a father or mother, make your children the most important priority in your life and build your other communities around them. If you are not a parent, look for children who could benefit from your investment in their lives."

I have mistakenly viewed parenting from the outside as an inward-looking time when parents worlds dramatically narrow, and the energy the have for nonparenting tasks slips away. Wallis' a vice provides a new challenging take on this. To make a difference in the world, we must start b embracing the unconditional love we have for o children, spouses, friends and communities. Th Psalms can guide us in this journey.—*ag*

Editor's note: I plan to be on maternity leave July and part of August. Gordon Houser will serve as acting editor during this time. Rebecca Helmuth will oversee *TMail* and web editing. Please send emails to gordonh@themennonite.org and rebecca@themennonite.org.

A FORUM FOR THE VOICES OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA

The Mennonite

Walking with the homeless

Hugh Hollowell with Love Wins in Raleigh, N.C.

August 2014

www.TheMennonite.org

INSIDE:

- A fresh look at Job
- What Menno got wrong
- Misconceptions and victim blaming
- Will the Internet remain free?
- Waiting in prayer

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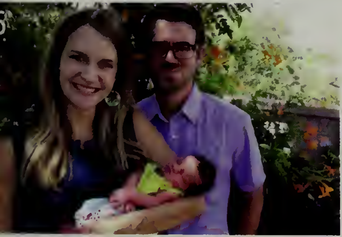

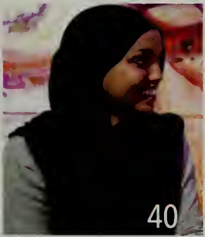

ON THE COVER: Photo provided by Love Wins

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theMennonite
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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

No papal office

We write in response to the letter (May) from C. Norman Kraus. In short, there is no papal office in Mennonite Church USA.

The questions of Kraus are specifically addressed in the bylaws of Mennonite Church USA. Those bylaws were approved and adopted by delegates to the MC USA Assembly in July 2001 and amended and modified by delegates in later assemblies in Atlanta in 2003, Charlotte in 2005 and Phoenix in 2013. Article VIII, Section 2 of those bylaws specifically refers to the selection and employment by the Executive Board of "an Executive Director as a primary administrative officer who shall be its principal agent in the management of Mennonite Church USA." The bylaws go on to state that "the Executive Director shall have ... such general and specific duties as the Executive Board shall assign to the Executive Director from time to time." Those provisions need to be read alongside Article VI, Section 1.b of the bylaws, which states that the Executive Board has the responsibility to "provide leadership and spiritual oversight in articulating the vision of Mennonite Church USA."

The Executive Board has delegated to Ervin Stutzman, the duly appointed Executive Director of the denomination, the responsibility of "providing leadership and spiritual oversight in articulating the vision of Mennonite Church USA." Stutzman acts under the direction and authority and with the ap- proval of the Executive Board, and we believe he does so quite effectively. From the time he assumed his position Stutzman has worked with the Executive Board and the moderators with clear understandings of the limits of hi authority, and he remains in regular an frequent communication with the moderator and the Executive Committee.

During his tenure, Stutzman has been responsible for articulating the theology and understandings of the denomination as expressed in its approved documents. For some that articulation has not been strong enough. For others the approved documents do not reflect an ecclesiology ap propriate for these times. As we work together on these matters, we believe it is important to remain respectful of all who are working to help Mennonite Church USA live into its mission of healing and hope.

Any concerns about Stutzman's statements, positions and actions should be directed to him or to the Executive Board through the moderator, to whom he reports and is accountable.—*Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, Mennonite Church USA moderator; Ed Diller, former moderator and parliamentarian*

Too many pages about Yoder

Being a member of the male persuasion, I hesitate to comment on the three pages given to John Howard Yoder in the June News Analysis, but I will anyway. He has been gone now fo 17 years. He apologized and asked for forgiveness (What happened to "70 X 7"?), and there have been many, many pages already given to this. I'm having trouble understanding what's to be achieved by perpetuating this unsavor story.—*D. Lowell Nissley, Sarasota, Fla*

Wealth disparity

Thank you for Harvey Yoder's "Dispar ity Between Us and Our World Neighbors" (Opinion, May). Yoder's few statistics graphically highlight the grea disparity between the level of educational resources available to us here in North America and those available to our global partner churches. The training programs they operate fill a crucial leadership training role in these rapidly growing churches.

As schools here continue to expand facilities and programs in order to stay current and even on the academic cutting edge, the disparity gap keeps increasing. Our small denomination has limited resources yet supports five full-fledged and sometimes competing college/university programs in addition to two seminaries. We encourage these schools to maximize opportunities for collaboration and sharing of resources.

We affirm the various relationships that have been built between North American programs and global partner institutions/programs through sharing of faculty, consultation, student cross-cultural visits, student cross enrollment and donation of equipment. We appeal for an expansion of such efforts along with creative exploration of additional ways of making our global partnerships practical and substantial.

We are a small group of people committed to building support for one of the global programs Yoder mentions, the Mennonite Theological College of East Africa in Tanzania. We encourage anyone who contributes to one of our North American programs additionally to "adopt" and regularly support a global program as well.—*Marian Buckwalter, Susan Godshall, Ernie Hess, Don Jacobs, Kevin Ressler, Verle Rufenacht, David Shenk, Amos Stoltzfus, Daniel Wenger*

Spoiled brats

The article by Peter Epp, "Spoiled, Entitled Brats" (New Voices, May) was thoughtful and well written. It gave me lots to think about.—*Susan Howell, Resaca, Ga.*

Lutheran perspective

I am not a Mennonite. I am a retired Lutheran clergyman. However, for the past three years, I have been reading *The Mennonite*. Each month my neighbor, Earl Frankenfield (Salford Mennonite) passes along his copy to me. I am sensitive to the discussion on sexuality among the Mennonites. I especially appreciated the dialogue between Martin Shupack and Mark Nation in the June issue. Such conversations are key for moving forward.

Our Lutheran denomination (ELCA) during 2000-2008 carried on such a discussion. A set of four study/discussion guides were developed and made available for use in all our congregations. Our discussions were heated and went on for eight years. A constant focus was always to interpret biblical texts in their historical, biblical and cultural contexts. Finally, in November 2008, our denomination adopted a statement on human sexuality. The statement ended up placing same-gender relationships within the larger topic of human sexuality.

Our statement is not perfect but certainly provides some directions/guidelines for moving forward.—*George E. Keck, Harleysville, Pa.*

Grateful for money's redirection

Christian Peacemaker Teams is the recipient of many war-tax resisters' redirected funds, including funds of those featured in the June issue.

Ignited by pressing questions, What if pacifist Christians trained as hard for peace as militaries do for war? and, What if peacemakers were willing to sacrifice as much as soldiers do? CPT builds partnerships that transform violence and oppression. The money is well-allocated in CPT; we have only 6 percent administrative costs and a needs-based stipend structure. After

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

We at *The Mennonite* are celebrating the birth of Ella Florence Miller to interim editor Anna Groff and her husband, Brian Miller. (See page 6.) Anna is on maternity leave.

Our cover story (page 12) is about Hugh Hollowell, who is part of Raleigh (N.C.) Mennonite Church. As a stockbroker in his late 20s, "he began reading about the Anabaptists and their Jesus-centered approach to gospel living," writes Laurie Oswald Robinson. He moved to Raleigh, "where in 2007 he founded Love Wins Ministries in order to become a pastoral presence of unconditional love for those experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity."

In other stories, Melodie Davis takes a fresh look at Job (page 17), Karen Andres explores God's healing work among people with addictions (page 21) and Douglas Kaufman looks at what Menno got wrong and the difference it makes (page 24).

Mennonite Church USA has created a Discernment Group on sexual abuse. See a report of their progress on page 38. Carolyn Holderread Heggen, an advisor to that group, challenges misconceptions and victim blaming around John Howard Yoder's abuse of women (Opinion, page 31).

The Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA met in June and voted to disapprove the decision by Mountain States Mennonite Conference (MSMC) to license for ministry Theda Good (see page 32). This has led to much discussion in the church and on our website and Facebook page.

Due to the volume of letters we are receiving, we've decided to publish some on our website. Go to www.themennonite.org.

In these times of disagreement on various issues, we need a wild, divine hope (page 55), and we need to wait in prayer (page 56).—*Editor*

MC Canada delegates to continue processing being a faithful church

WINNIPEG, Manitoba—At Mennonite Church Canada's Assembly 2014, delegates discussed whether congregations should take up for processing three questions proposed by the Being a Faithful Church Task Force.

They voted 263 to 30 in favor of moving to the next steps, giving the task force room to work with the phrasing of the questions over concerns raised by some of the language used.

The three questions proposed by the BFC Task Force were as follows:

1. God's gift of unity in Christ is not invalidated by our disagreement. How shall we maintain our unity in Christ as congregations, area church or national church while understanding matters of same-sex relationships differently?
2. Most responses indicated a desire to be "more compassionate and welcoming of those individuals who are same-sex attracted." Describe how your congregation hopes to reflect this desire.
3. In reviewing the trends, what counsel do you have for the area or national church in light of the different understandings of compassionate responses toward people that are in same-sex relationships?—*Mennonite Church Canada*

photo provided

Welcome, Ella, to *The Mennonite* family

Interim editor Anna Groff, with Brian Miller, her husband, holds Ella Florence Miller, born July 6. She arrived at 7 lbs. 11 oz. and 19 inches. The family is at home in Tucson, Ariz.—*The Mennonite*

John M. Drescher, author, teacher, pastor dies at 85

NEWTON, Kan.—John M. Drescher, 85, well-known author, teacher and pastor, died July 10 at his home in Quakertown, Pa. He was author of 37 books, hundreds of magazine articles and former editor of *Gospel Herald*.

His book *Seven Things Children Need* (Herald Press, 1976) has been published in at least 20 languages, and his articles have been translated into at least 70 languages.

He was editor of *Gospel Herald*, the Mennonite Church magazine, from 1962 to 1973. He also served as a pastor and seminary teacher.

He was a member of Finland Mennonite Church, Pennsburg, Pa.

He is survived by his wife, Betty (Keener) Drescher, his children Ron of Monterey, Tenn.; Sandy Drescher-Lehman of Green Lane, Pa.; Rose Longacre of Quakertown; Joe of Middletown Conn.; David of Morrisville, N.C.; 14 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; brother Luke M. of Harrisonburg, Va., and sister Ruth Glick of Kidron, Ohio.—*The Mennonite*

MW USA co-director announces retirement

MINNEAPOLIS—Ruth Lapp Guengerich, co-director Mennonite Women USA, has announced her retirement, scheduled for the spring of 2015.

Guengerich joined Mennonite Women USA in this role in June 2011, serving with Rhoda Keener in directin the organization's ministry of empowering women and women's groups.

Rhoda Charles, board chair, says, "Ruth's strong, dedicated leadership was greatly appreciated at this time of rapid growth for MW USA, with many Sister Care seminars, both in U.S. conferences and internationally."

Guengerich provided leadership for the oversight of *Timbrel*, MW USA's quarterly magazine, and the annual women's Bible study guide.

She served as liaison to the board o directors and editorial advisory counci provided staff supervision, budget preparation and oversight; leadership training for area conference women; International Women's Fund coordinatio and represented MW USA to the broader church, including biennial conventions and with the Women in Leadership Project.

Rhoda Keener will continue with MW USA as Sister Care director.

Charles announced that the personnel committee plans to hire a full-time executive director for Mennonite Women USA in 2015.—*MW USA*

Service Adventure worker receives national award

ELKHART, Ind.—Mark Kreider, a Service Adventure participant in the Anchorage, Alaska, unit was awarded the national "Outstanding Youth" award by the Bureau of Land Management on May 29.

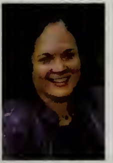
Kreider, a member of Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton, Kan., was chosen out of dozens of nominees for his hard work to conserve public lands. The award is part of a larger group of nine "Making a Difference" awards given to volunteers throughout the country.

Kreider works with the Bureau of Land Management in the Anchorage (Alaska) Field Office. He sees the award as a sign from his supervisors that they care for and appreciate him as a volunteer. Although Kreider has served 1,400 hours over the last 10 months, he doesn't see himself as a "super-worker."

Kreider also learned about living in a Christian community, where each participant comes from a unique family culture and brings different expectations.—*Mennonite Mission Network*

Bluffton dean of students wins national award for promoting diversity

BLUFFTON, Ohio—Dr. Julie DeGraw, vice president for student life and dean of students at Bluffton University, has been honored by the Association for Christians in Student Development (ACSD) for her promotion of diversity.



DeGraw, who has been at Bluffton since 2012, received the Jane Hideko Higa Multicultural Competency and Advancement Award from ACSD at its recent conference at Bethel University in St. Paul, Minn.

The award was established in 2011 to recognize "significant contributions toward increased understanding and promotion of multiculturalism" in the association and recipients' home institutions, according to ACSD's website.

DeGraw was cited by the association as a "key member" of its diversity task force, for presenting numerous workshops on diversity at ACSD annual conferences and other professional gatherings and for creating many mentoring opportunities for professionals in the association.—*Bluffton University*

Peace Sunday is Sept. 21

ELKHART, Ind.—Sept. 21 has been designated as Peace Sunday by Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite World Conference.

Peace Sunday is the Sunday closest to the United Nations' International Day of Peace on Sept. 21. The Peace and Justice Support Network has created worship materials that congregations may use on this or any Sunday throughout the year. Peace Sunday is an annual opportunity to acknowledge and respond to the violence that continues to be our culture's all-too-frequent response to conflict.

The theme of the Peace Sunday resources this year is "Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem." The online resources include prayers, sermon seeds, children's stories and song suggestions.

Peace Sunday resources were written by Tom Harder, co-pastor of Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church, Wichita, Kan. They are available online at www.pjsn.org.—*Peace and Justice Support Network*

First IBA book becomes available in English

ELKHART, Ind.—Mennonite Education Agency and the Hispanic Pastoral and Leadership Education office (HPLE) has announced the completion of the first Instituto Bíblico Anabautista (IBA) book translated into English. *Introduction to Biblical Study*, written by Jose Oritz and translated by Amzie Yoder, was completed in June, becoming the first of 16 IBA books to be available in English.

IBA began 25 years ago as a program providing Anabaptist-based Bible studies for the growing number of Hispanic congregants and leaders new to the Mennonite church. This training, previously provided only in Spanish, is continuing to grow. In recent years an increased call for the materials to be available in English has been made.

IBA is comprised of 45 study centers and will graduate 10 students in the next several months. The second IBA book, *Emmanuel: Life and Ministry of Christ*, written by Rigoberto Negron and translated by Mauricio Chenlo, is scheduled to complete translation this fall. The plan is for all 16 books to be translated by the fall of 2019.—*Mennonite Education Agency*

Paul Hunt

Solar panels on church

Construction has been completed on a 10kw photovoltaic solar panel array on the roof of First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana, Ill. The church views this project as a way to live out their faith in response to the negative effects of climate change.The solar panels will reduce the church's carbon footprint by 11 metric tons of carbon per year, the equivalent of annually planting 185 trees.—*First Mennonite Church of Champaign-Urbana*

God is like a bluebird

Isaac Villegas is pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Church.

As the willow oak and yellow pine trees in my neighborhood begin to bud, as branches and stems turn from brown to green, the Eastern bluebirds arrive. I watch one, then another, darting from tree to tree, pausing to scan the landscape, then swooshing to the ground in a streak of blue. Picking through the pine needles and the layers of decomposing leaves in my backyard, a bird clutches a twig with its beak, then shoots up to the top of a gazebo, where it disappears into a birdhouse. Tirelessly, day after day, week after week, morning and evening, the bluebird weaves a nest, prophesying life.

God is like the bluebird in my backyard, making room for life to be born in the world—renewed and restored life, bountiful and abounding life. “I came that they may have life,” Jesus announced, “and have it abundantly.” God dashes through the world, gathering people, mingling relationships, intertwining us into a church, weaving us into nests where God makes us into a home for life, a home for people to be nourished and sustained, a place where people are born again, made new.

God gathers people who have been rejected by the world and dumped by the church.

Early one morning, I peeked into the nest. Amid the carefully entwined layers of twigs and stems, I noticed strange ingredients: a metal paperclip, lint from my laundry, strips of shredded paper from the recycling bin, shards of yellow plastic from something I must have dumped in the trash. The bluebirds are resourceful, scavenging the neighborhood, rummaging through trash, collecting bits and pieces from everywhere, even from litter.

God gathers people who have been rejected by the world, trashed by society and dumped by the church—refused people. As the apostle Paul wrote, “God chose what is despised in the world.” Like the bluebird in my backyard, the Spirit of God chooses the expelled and shunned, the rejected and spurned, the reproached and censured, the maligned and despised, and weaves all of us into bonds of fellowship, into a life-sustaining community of outsiders, an outcast church.

As Mennonites, we have been this nest—God’s refuge of the despised—because we are part of the Anabaptist tradition, a group of believers who were rejected by the rest of the church. Our spiritual ancestors were people spurned by neighbors and friends, trashed by Christian sisters and brothers, expelled from cities and congregations, scorned by church leaders, branded a heretics. “By everyone we’re scorned and shunned as would-be agitators, as heretics and traitors,” wrote Leonhard Schiemer, a 16th-century Anabaptist martyr.

In 1526, the Zurich Council issued a statemen against “the wayward Anabaptists,” who were “stubborn in their opinions, contrary to their oaths, vows and promises, and have exhibited disobedience”—alleged anarchists whose form of church would result, the council feared, in “destructive consequences for Christian life.” The great church reformer Martin Luther also condemned our people because, he wrote, Anabaptists are “crue in damning the ministry of the Word, following uncertai doctrines, attacking correct teaching and attempting to destroy authority.”

God formed Anabaptism from the debris of other traditions, from people rejected by Roman Catholics and Protestants. From the ostracized and unwelcomed, the Holy Spirit picked through the discarded remnants of mainstream churches and pieced together a church, a nest with layers unwanted lives interwoven into a precarious community of believers. As Mennonites, as Anabaptists, we’ve become part of a ragtag church that lives because of the tireless and graceful labor of the Spirit, the One who has connected all of us, including alleged anarchists with questionable theologies, reputed enemies of Christendom’s traditions, supposed antagonists of society’s moral codes, people accused of contaminating true religion, people condemned for polluting a pure faith.

Here we are, part of this church, part of the despised of history—some of us still accused of being unholy sinners who dirty the church, yet al of us chosen by God and now woven into a church, where my life overlaps with yours, your life interlocks with mine, theirs with ours and ours with theirs, as together we become a nest fo life to be born in the world, a home for the Spirit’ love to grow, a place for Christ’s peace to flourish.

God is like the bluebird, prophesying life through us, as long as we let God build all of us into a nest, a church, a home for abundant life. TM

Korean Anabaptist Fellowship engages challenges

"So what is the minimum that it takes to call yourself a Mennonite church?" Hyun Hur asked with a twinkle in his eye. But behind the query was an unmistakable seriousness.

For nearly a decade, Hyun and Sue Park-Hur, his wife, have devoted themselves to mission work in Korean contexts, most recently as directors of ReconciliAsian, a Mennonite peace center in Los Angeles. Although Hyun has read the classics of Anabaptist-Mennonite history and theology, studied under Wilbert Shenk at Fuller Theological Seminary, participated in several Mennonite Church USA national conventions and co-pastors the Mountain View Mennonite Church, the question of what "qualifies" a Korean congregation as a bona fide Anabaptist or Mennonite church is not fully resolved.

In many regards, the Korean Anabaptist movement that provides the context for Hyun and Sue's work is the ideal model for church growth in the global Anabaptist-Mennonite fellowship.

In the early 1990s, Lee Yoon Shik heard about Mennonites from a teacher who had encountered Mennonite Central Committee volunteers at a South Korean vocational school decades earlier. After several years of study at Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Shik returned to his home in Chun Cheon and met for study and prayer with several other Christians—many of them university professors—who were disillusioned with the hierarchical and militaristic nature of the Korean church. As Kyong-Jung Kim describes the church's origins in *Churches Engage Asian Traditions* (Mennonite Global History Series, 2011), the group's primary question was, What is the nature of the New Testament church, and how can we bring that church into our lives? In 1996, Shik and his friends founded Jesus Village Church, the first self-identified Anabaptist church in Korea.

In the years since then, the development of an indigenous Korean Anabaptist movement has been remarkable. With support from Mennonite Church Canada Witness, local leaders established the Korean Anabaptist Center to gather resources, respond to inquiries and provide training in Anabaptist theology.

A second congregation, Grace and Peace Mennonite Church, soon emerged in Seoul. Other projects followed: a language school called Connexus, a publishing house specializing in translations, a periodical (*The Korean Anabaptist Journal*) and the Korean Peace Institute. More recently, in the central and southern part of the peninsula, several new house churches have emerged who are also hungry for Anabaptist teaching. In November 2009, Hyun Hur helped establish the Korean Anabaptist Fellowship to provide supportive relationships among Korean church leaders.

By any objective measure, the level of commitment and creativity evident within this fledgling movement is cause for celebration. Yet, not surprisingly, the Korean Anabaptist movement has also experienced some growing pains. Church leaders, who come from a variety of denominational backgrounds, struggle every day with the question of how to contextualize Anabaptist theology within traditional Korean culture.

For example, military conscription in South Korea is compulsory, with no possibility for alternative service. Only one Christian group—generally regarded as a cult in South Korea—has practiced conscientious objection, which brings with it a jail sentence and lifelong social consequences. How quickly should Korean Anabaptist congregations marginalize themselves by publically advocating for this position?

Equally complicated is the question of church polity. The Korean Anabaptist movement today consists of several established congregations, a number of house fellowships, a host of programs and many interested individuals. Whereas the Korean Anabaptist Center has a strong academic orientation, with many connections to North American Mennonites, the younger fellowships that have emerged elsewhere in the country have a different background and cultural flavor.

What sort of church structures best serve the identity of the whole group? And who should be empowered to determine these questions? As Hyun and other Korean church leaders have discovered, the teachings of Jesus and the early church, the story of the 16th-century Anabaptists and the texts of Mennonite theologians do not provide simple answers to all the practical, often messy, questions of daily church life.

Ultimately, the questions the Korean Anabaptist Fellowship are struggling with are our questions as well: How do we appropriately engage our cultural context? What shape and form will we give our convictions? What does it mean to be church amid our differences?

In the end, we're all in this together. TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

Conscription into the armed forces in South Korea is compulsory, with no possibility for alternative service.

Christians walling themselves off

In his article "The Great Secession" (*The Atlantic*, July/August), Jonathan Rauch relates a news story from St. Louis about a Christian-owned dog-walking business that refused to serve a customer who supported legalizing marijuana.

We've seen such discrimination in the name of religion often in the news. A Christian photographer refused to provide services for gay weddings. Hobby Lobby and others refused to offer insurance that covers certain kinds of contraception. And in April, Mississippi passed legislation allowing businesses to claim a religious defense if sued for discrimination.

Religious liberty: Such actions are taken in the name of religious liberty, but they may have unintended consequences. By separating themselves from the secular world (or whatever term you want to use), these Christians are also cutting off their chances of engaging such people (customers, employees) about their faith.

This raises the question, Are Christians more afraid of being influenced by unbelievers than they are confident in their faith to influence them?

Rauch states up front that as a "homosexual atheist" he doesn't expect religious conservatives to take his advice. But he offers it anyway. He writes, "When religion isolates itself from secular society, both sides lose, but religion loses more."

With the increasing acceptance of gay marriage, many religious conservatives feel battered and want to be left alone. Rauch asked some people why they felt the need to hunker down. One reason is "the fear that traditional religious views, especially about marriage, will soon be condemned as no better than racism, and that religious dissenters will be driven from respectable society, denied government contracts and passed over for jobs."

He tells about an encounter he had after a talk he gave on free speech. A woman approached him and claimed that the school system where she works harasses and fires anyone who questions gay marriage. "I wanted to point out that in most states it's perfectly legal to fire people just for being gay," Rauch writes, "whereas Christians enjoy robust federal and state antidiscrimination protections, but the look in her eyes was too fearful for convincing."

Around the turn of the millennium there was some hope of a new partnership between our elected and religious leaders, but eventually trust eroded, then collapsed. "Now it's the 'war on religion' versus the 'war on women,' and court dockets are full of religious liberty cases," Rauch writes.

Decades ago, during the divorce revolution, writes Rauch, it likely never occurred to Catholic bakers to tell remarrying customers, "Your so-called second marriage is a lie, so take your business elsewhere."

Line-drawing: Now we live in a time of drawing lines. Rauch acknowledges that "there is an absolutist streak among some secular civil-rights advocates" as well and that "they are too quick to overlook the unique role religion plays in American life and the unique protections it enjoys under the First Amendment."

However, associating Christianity with a determination to discriminate "puts the faithful in open conflict with the value that young Americans hold most sacred," he writes.

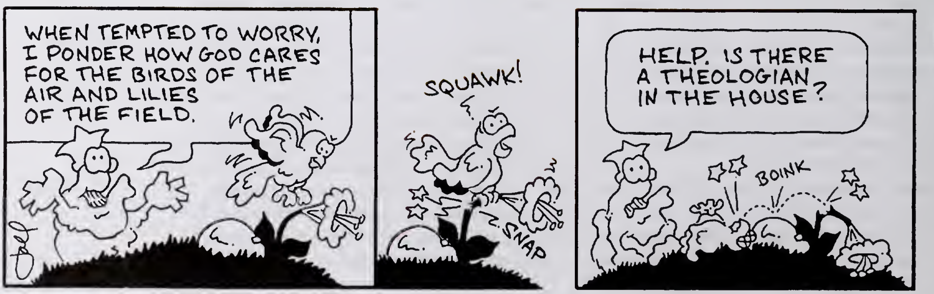
There is an alternative, Rauch points out, "a missionary tradition of engagement and education, of resolutely and even cheerfully going out into an often uncomprehending world."

He warns that "the First Church of Discrimination will find few adherents in 21st-century America," according to polls. Social secession is "a step toward isolation" that is "bad for society but even worse for the religion."

Instead Christians can act out of faith rather than fear.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


WHEN TEMPTED TO WORRY, I PONDER HOW GOD CARES FOR THE BIRDS OF THE AIR AND LILIES OF THE FIELD.
SQUAWK!
SNAP
HELP. IS THERE A THEOLOGIAN IN THE HOUSE?
BOINK

© Pontius.com

—compiled by Gordon Houser

> "We have an economy founded foursquare on the Seven Deadly Sins. Just go down the list."—Wendell Berry

The view from the coffin

Jeffrey M. Piehler, a surgeon dying of cancer, angered his wife when he announced that he was planning to build his own pine coffin. His friends also misunderstood his motives; they thought it was a sign he was giving up on life. In fact, the activity helped him live more fully and put things in proper perspective. "It's pretty much impossible to feel anger at someone for driving too slowly in front of you in traffic when you've just come from sanding your own coffin," he says.—*Christian Century*

10 scientific findings that will change our perspective

1. A meaningful life is different—and healthier—than a happy one.

2. The emotional benefits of altruism might be a human universal.

3. Mindfulness meditation makes people more altruistic—even when confronted with barriers to compassionate action.

4. Meditation changes gene expression.

5. Mindfulness training improves teachers' performance in the classroom.

6. There's nothing simple about happiness.

7. Gratitude can save your life.

8. Employees are motivated by giving as well as getting.

9. Subtle contextual factors influence our sense of right and wrong.

10. Anyone can cultivate empathic skills—even psychopaths.

—*spiritualityhealth.com*

183

Questions asked of Jesus in the Gospels

307

Questions asked by Jesus in the Gospels

—*Martin B. Copenhaver*

-5%

Change in median household income, 2008-12

+44%

Change in corporate profits after tax, 2008-12—*Mother Jones*

One-quarter of world harbors anti-Semitic sentiment

The first-ever global study of anti-Semitic attitudes shows that more than a quarter of the world's population harbors intense anti-Jewish sentiment, with region, more than religion, shaping people's view of Jews and Judaism. The poll, released May 13 by the New York-based Anti-Defamation League, also finds that a large proportion of the world has never heard of the Holocaust or denies historical accounts of it.—*Religion News Service*

Israelis against the draft

About 50 Israeli youth have signed a letter sent to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saying they refuse to serve in the Israel Defense Forces. The letter cites the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories as the reason for their resistance. The group also referred to human rights violations in the West Bank. "Any military service perpetuates the current situation, and therefore we cannot take part in a system that carries out these deeds," the letter said.—*The Christian Century*

For a better economy, tax beer

Analyzing state-level data covering the years 1971-2007, including excise taxes leveled on beer, the University of Connecticut's Resul Cesur and Inas Rashad Kelly of Queens College discovered an inverse relationship between the amount of beer consumed and economic growth. Writing in the journal *Economic Inquiry*, they point to such factors as lost workdays and lower productivity on the part of workers with hangovers and suggest increases in alcohol excise taxes could promote economic growth by discouraging drinking.

—*Pacific Standard*

Numbers to ponder

- Daily calories recommended for adults with moderate activity: **2,300**
- Estimated calories consumed daily by average adult American in 2000: **2,700**
- Number of Americans who are chronically hungry: **18 million**
- Estimated number of people who could be fed entirely by surplus calories of Americans aged 18-34: **11.7 million**
- Families made homeless by flooding and other damage after Hurricane Katrina: **600,000**
- U.S. cities expected to be affected by sea level rise in 2050: **315**
- Mayors who signed the "Resilient Communities for America" agreement for climate preparedness: **78**—*Yes! Magazine*
- Average cost of one day in a U.S. hospital: **$4,287**
- Average cost of one day in a hospital in Australia, the country with the next-highest rate: **$1,472**
- Percent of the world's insecticide usage accounted for by cotton: **15**—*Pacific Standard*

Walking with the homeless

Hugh Hollowell has traded worldly wealth for the riches of homeless ministry.

Hugh Hollowell in Raleigh, N.C.

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

In his late 20s, says Hugh Hollowell, a driven and restless stockbroker, he began reading about the Anabaptists and their Jesus-centered approach to gospel living. As he devoured such books as *The Politics of Jesus*, *The Anabaptist Vision* and *Engaging Anabaptism*, he was shaken to his core.

He grew up poor in the tiny backwoods Mississippi town of Byhalia and joined the Marines to better himself, which eventually led to seeking his fortune in Memphis. As the stack of finished books grew higher, he realized how unhappy and unhealthy he had become in chasing the American dream. And though he was raised in an evangelical-oriented Methodist church, his reading uncovered how deeply he resonated with the Anabaptist faith perspective on caring for the poor and seeking to address injustice.

"The Marines paid for my college, after which I got involved in sales in the financial industry," he said in a mid-June telephone interview. "I was a poor kid who was making a lot of money, but I was miserable. I was throwing up blood and had ulcers and was drinking way too much. I was forcing myself to be something I was not in a field rife with ethical issues."

After a year of reading, he was troubled by the huge disconnect between his beliefs and his deeds. "I abruptly quit without knowing what I was going to do next," he said. "I was climbing the wrong ladder and leaning against the wrong wall. The Anabaptists helped me see that Christianity is not so much about life after death but about following Jesus in this life. At 30, I decided to start over."

His first step in starting over was buying a used book store in Memphis, where he read books from the store's shelves on homelessness. He also volunteered with ministries that served people experiencing poverty and homelessness. After four years, he sold the bookstore and moved to Raleigh, N.C. That's where in 2007 he founded Love Wins Ministries in order to become a pastoral presence of unconditional love for those experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. About a year later, he became part of Raleigh Mennonite Church (RMC), where he was licensed and ordained for special ministry to the homeless through Virginia Mennonite Conference in Mennonite Church USA.

Forging hospitality of the heart

The more he worked with people and read about homelessness, the more he realized that the only thing keeping any of us from homelessness is our relationships, he said. So he shaped Love Wins around the building of relationships and community and only those programs that are entries into relationships. The ministry runs a Hospitality House, shares a biscuits-and-coffee breakfast every Saturday and Sunday morning, provides advocacy and community education and holds a Sunday afternoon worship service.

Hollowell, also a writer and a blogger, is executive director of this fast-growing ministry. What began as no-budget, goodwill visits to soup kitchens and parks has morphed into a yearly budget of $250,000. It's informed through blogs and other social media and fueled by a wide net of individual and group donors. It supports several staff members and engages volunteers from many area congregations.

Homelessness is a relationship problem, and its symptoms are hunger and lack of housing, education and jobs.

The staff strives to befriend those without homes and educate those with homes about the need to heal the lonely heart. It's only by planting seeds of belonging and connection that the fruits of financial, emotional and social stability and skills can eventually grow, he said. Homelessness is a relationship problem, and its symptoms are hunger and lack of housing, education and jobs.

"Studies show that those who are involved in church or have other strong social networks al-

Pastor Duane Beck (behind the microphone) and others at Raleigh Mennonite Church pray for Hugh Hollowell and his Love Wins ministry. Photo provided

Hugh Hollowell with a baby from a family in the community. Photo provided

most never become homeless,” he said. “And those who have been homeless for more than a year never leave homelessness without developing a social network. For example, homelessness is nearly nonexistent among Mennonites and the Amish. And if my wife threw me out, I already know three people I could call who would let me sleep on their couch. I would not need to find a shelter.”

Their mission is that of loving people, one person at a time, in order to sow seeds of potential stability in the soil of relationship.

Hollowell illustrates this by telling the story of his homeless friend Peggy. She is a crack addict and does not have any money. She trades sex for drugs, and transactions can get violent. She ends up in the hospital three or four times a year as an assault victim. He recalls, “One morning three or four months after we first met, I got a phone call at 6 a.m. from Peggy, who tells me she is in the emergency room. I lived only 10 minutes away, so I offered to throw on some clothes and come sit with her.”

Peggy said not to come because she would be released soon. When he asked why she had calle him then, she said, “The nurses say to me, ‘Peggy, honey, is there anyone you could call?’ Before I knew you, I could not come up with a name But tonight in the ambulance, when they asked me that question, I said, ‘Hugh. You can call Hugh.’ ”

Hollowell believes Peggy felt safe to call because she sensed he had no agenda to fix her. “To this day, Peggy is still trading sex for drugs,” he said. “She has not miraculously become a parago of virtue. She is still Peggy, with all her warts and frustrations and problems. I wish I could tell you that because of my work she is going to change. I hope she will someday respect herself and want t be sober, and I pray for that to happen. But one thing I do know is that at least one time when sh was scared and alone, she had someone to call. I do not know if that is success or not, but it will have to do until other things come along. At Love Wins, we are giving people a place to call when there is no one else to call.”

Counting people, not numbers

Despite the humble hiddenness of much of the ministry, Love Wins was thrust into the national public eye last summer. That’s when Raleigh police on Aug. 24 stopped staff members and volunteers from serving Saturday biscuits and coffee o sidewalks outside Moore Square, a downtown park—something they had done for six years. “Biscuit Gate” spread like wildfire through news channels and social media around the world. Public outrage forced the Raleigh City Council to giv up its opposition. As a follow up, the city paid for renovations to an empty warehouse that now serves as a downtown gathering space for the homeless.

“We could have spent all our resources in dealing with the buzz, but we still had 100 people coming through our Hospitality House doors every day to do laundry and make a sandwich and look for socks,” said Sara Acosta, director of communications for Love Wins, during a mid-June telephone interview. “At the end of the day, we ar not politicos. At the same time, we are now being taken more seriously and are no longer seen as a baby, grassroots nonprofit.”

As a result of the incident, new eyes are watching for how many homes and jobs are gained each year, Hollowell said. But he and the staff resist quantification. Their mission is that of loving people, one person at a time, in order to sow seeds o potential stability in the soil of relationship.

"In a church, when someone gets sick and dies, casseroles are brought to the home," he said. "But congregations don't focus on the numbers of casseroles shared, because casseroles are the side effect of being in community. Similarly, Love Wins is not about projects and numbers but about people. We have baptized three people this year. And in the last 12 months 14 people have moved into stable homes and 25 people have gotten jobs. But those are the casseroles and are not what we are measuring."

Nevertheless, the ministry's relational fruitfulness is undeniable. Up to 100 people each on Saturday and Sunday enjoy the breakfast giveaway. And up to 100 people each weekday come through the Hospitality House on West Jones Street to fix a sandwich, do laundry, get a haircut, chat with friends, receive pastoral care, use the telephone, connect with free WiFi and replenish hygiene items.

Several dozen people come to the house chapel for a 3 p.m. Sunday worship service to experience the hope and love of God in a nonjudgmental environment. Hollowell even officiated a wedding for Darius and Sonya, who at one time lived in a condemned house. Now they have their own home and have bought a second car. They both work. Darius is pursuing his CDL license. Sonya is getting ready to go back to school.

The ministry's advocacy and community education also isn't quantified but casts a wide net of influence. Staff members on behalf of their homeless friends talk with doctors, intercede with families, mediate broken relationships and speak in court. And staff members educate people at schools, churches and other community groups about how to best serve their neighbors who are suffering.

Local Mennonite church home for Hollowell

In the ministry whirlwind, Hollowell said he seeks rest at his spiritual home in RMC. It's where he and Pastor Duane Beck have forged a supportive friendship. RMC is also where Hollowell meets with a support group that includes Beck and Al Reberg, who is also tackling economic justice issues. Even though no one at RMC currently volunteers for Love Wins, the congregation provides yearly financial support and serves as a theological touchstone that grounds Hollowell's passion for ministry.

"Hugh is a real gift to us," Beck said during a mid-June telephone interview. "He sees himself as a pastor to people who are homeless and as a missionary to congregations to help convert people's attitudes about homelessness.

"Hugh is helping all of us middle-class folks feel more comfortable connecting with people on the street. Now when someone asks for a handout, I first greet them with my name and ask their name and shake their hand. Hugh's relational emphasis is shaping how we deal with this issue."

Beck said he is blessed that Hollowell and many others at RMC are engaged with ministries that don't require formal programming on the part of the church. Rather, they are responding to an organic unfolding of personal call. Beck said he inherited this culture when in 2005 he came to serve where many in the church family were working for or volunteering at nonprofit ministries beyond the church.

The congregation provides yearly financial support and serves as a theological touchstone that grounds Hollowell's passion for ministry.

"Hugh says it is really nice to be involved in a church where he is not seen as a Christian hero because he is working in a homeless ministry,"

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From left: Kenny Eckert, Hugh Hollowell, Amy Eckert, Ashley Barnes, members of the Love Wins community. Photo provided

Love Wins feeds people on the street. Photo provided

I spent most of my 20s chasing success, and I was miserable until I realized that the Scriptures taught me that God does not call us to be successful but to be faithful.—Hugh Hollowell

Beck said. "For example, one woman in our church is a midwife and volunteers in Africa to train other midwifes. He is grateful not to be put on a pedestal and feels like he doesn't have to be somebody other than himself."

Reberg said he considers Hugh to be a friend and a role model. "One of my favorite stories about Hugh is [about] when a woman came to ask him for money to pay the light bill," he said. "She finally had a little place of her own but still was short on resources to pay that bill. At that time, Hugh did not have extra funds to help her financially and told her so. But she kept pestering him, until he finally told her that if they came to turn off the lights, he would come to sit with her in the dark.

"This story is at the heart of what Love Wins is trying to do—have genuine, loving relationships with folks without trying to fix them. So often we think we have to do things that are going to help, and then we want to measure our success in metrics. You can't do that, and I'm glad Hugh doesn't try."

If Hollowell tries hard at anything, it is following hard after Jesus, depicted in the dozens of Anabaptist books he read as one who was not successful in the eyes of the world or his followers.

"I spent most of my 20s chasing success, and I was miserable until I realized that the Scriptures taught me that God does not call us to be successful but to be faithful. Was Jesus successful? He go killed. John the Baptist was beheaded. None of th prophets died well. None of the disciples died well.

Hollowell said the things that matter most to him are whether his friend Curtis has someone to call when he is drinking again or that when his friend Ramon gets evicted, he has someone to ca to help him move. It's when he can cheer on his friend Cassie, who decides to forgive the person she most hates.

"If what the Anabaptists have taught me is true then I agree to open myself up to pain when I love like Jesus loved. Peggy is still trading drugs for sex. She is beautiful and smart and could be so much more than that, but she's not. But if I love Peggy only when she does what I want her to do, then that is not the love that Jesus modeled—and the kind of love he calls me to share."

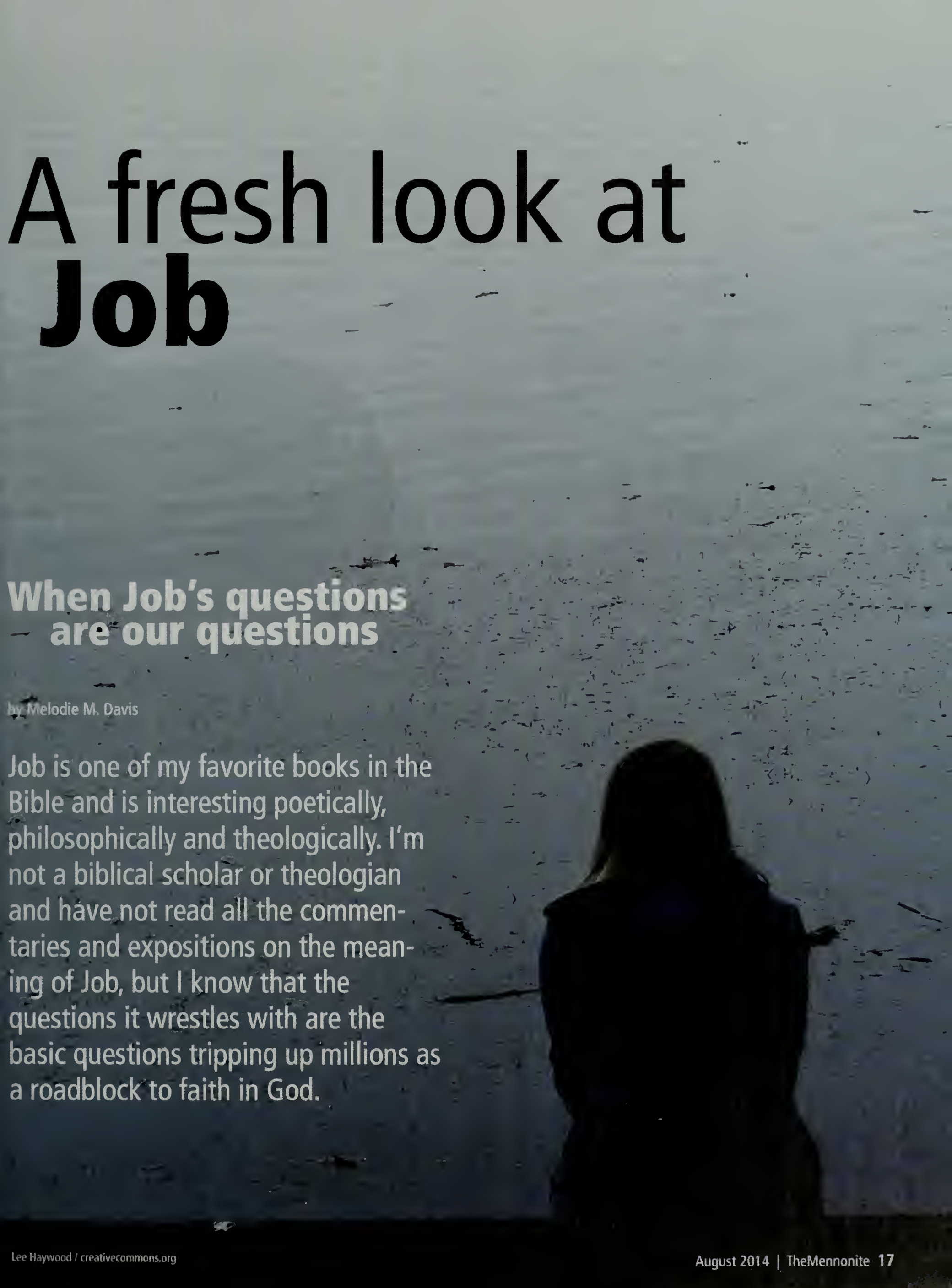
Laurie Oswald Robinson is a free-lance writer in Newton, Kan., and the author of Forever Family.

A fresh look at Job

When Job's questions are our questions

by Melodie M. Davis

Job is one of my favorite books in the Bible and is interesting poetically, philosophically and theologically. I'm not a biblical scholar or theologian and have not read all the commentaries and expositions on the meaning of Job, but I know that the questions it wrestles with are the basic questions tripping up millions as a roadblock to faith in God.



Lee Haywood / creativecommons.org

The basic question is, If God is so good, why does God allow the suffering that goes on in our world?

I love the way Job starts out in the rhythm and repetition of a great storyteller. My "is-this-a-fable-meter" rises as I read the first line: "There was a man named Job, living in the land of Uz." (My Bible footnotes say Uz is "an area whose exact location is unknown.") I think of the Wizard of Oz. Uz is also related to Oz, meaning East.

Most of us have trouble listening to or sitting with a suffering friend for one even one hour without trying to offer advice or misguided consolation or telling a similar story.

The repetition of sevens and threes in the counts of sons, daughters, sheep, camels and the summary of "richest man in the East" sounds like a great way to begin a fairy tale. Not that I think it is. From my view, Job was a real man who existed and suffered extensively, but the storytellers through the ages added their embellishments, like any good story based on a real character.

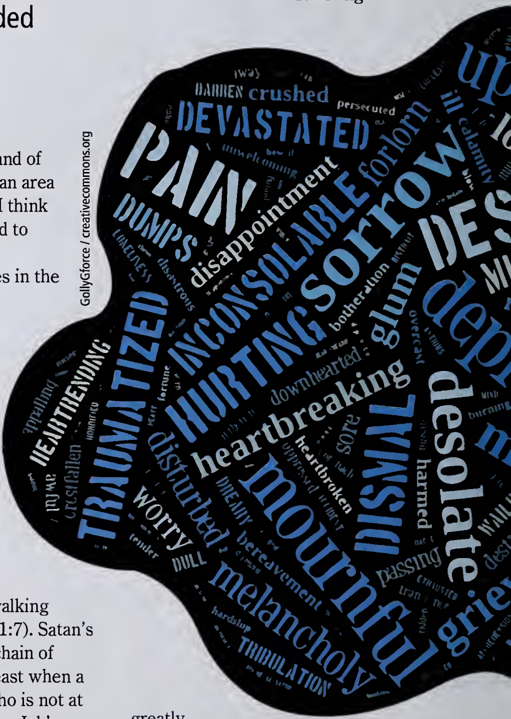
So the tests of Job start with the Lord asking Satan what he's been doing. Satan says, "Well, I've been walking here and there, roaming the earth" (1:7). Satan's challenge to God sets off a horrible chain of events. Job's children are having a feast when a messenger comes running to Job (who is not at the feast) and tells him that out among Job's oxen and donkeys, a neighboring tribe destroyed the animals and all the servants except himself. "I am the only one who escaped to tell you" (verse 15). This repeats with more servants reporting a new attack even "before he had finished speaking."

The storyteller in Job has his art down beautifully. This makes for a great read, even though the awfulness of losing all 10 children in one storm is horrifying, beyond bearing.

Job goes into immense grief. He laments and mourns but responds with, "The Lord gave, and now the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

In Chapter 2, again Satan has been "walking here and there roaming the earth," and this time he gets permission to attack Job himself but not kill the good man. Job's body is hit with unspeakable sores, and he pretty much goes into isolatio from any remaining family or friends.

Then we meet some of Job's friends, who ofte get a bad rap for their questions, which convey the prevailing wisdom of the time, that if you are suffering greatly you must have sinned greatly. But in this section it strikes me what great and close friends they must have been.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melancholy
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DISMAL
hardship
TRIBULATION
harmed
desolate
passing
burning

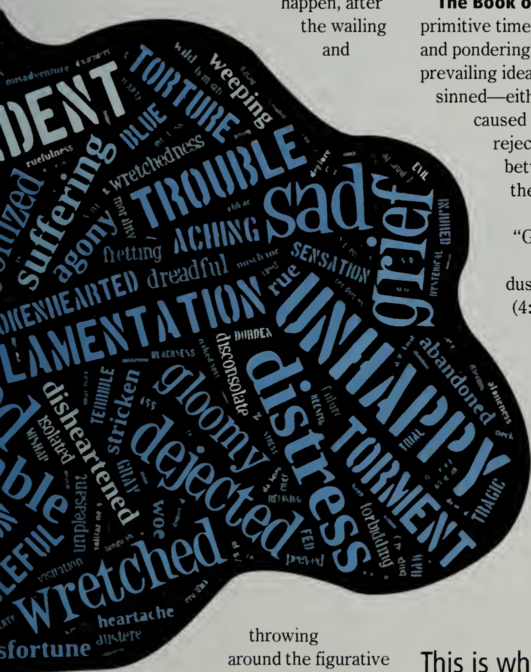
GollyGforce / creativecommons.org

After weeping and wailing like people did in tha time, they also tore their clothes and threw dust into the air and onto their heads. Sometimes I wish we dealt with grief and troubles in such a visible, visceral way. What awesome friends! Tha dust would have come from the trash and dung burned outside the town walls.

Job's friends sat on the ground with Job for seven days and nights without saying a word, because they saw how much he was suffering, the Bible says.

Most of us have trouble listening to or sitting with a suffering friend for even one hour without trying to offer advice or misguided consolation or telling a similar story. Here the friends sit and are depressed with Job for one solid week.

Finally Job breaks the silence and curses the day he was born. I can imagine what a relief this is. Job is human. He doesn't curse God but voices his frustration and despair. He goes on a bit. When bad things happen, after the wailing and throwing around the figurative ashes or dust, we often lash out in anger. It's part of the process.


DENT
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I love the way the Good News Bible puts the beginning of one friend's response when Job's done with his first outburst: "Job, will you be annoyed if I speak? I can't keep quiet any longer."

Later, in Chapter 8, his friend Bildad asks, "Are you finally through with your windy speech?" If we fault the friends for piling on their critique, we maybe should also give them credit for their unflinching honesty.

The first friend, Eliphaz (Chapter 4), presents the typical questions and explanations we have for suffering, and some that, thankfully, we have mostly gotten rid of. Job's friends aren't in on the secret revealed in the prologue, that Job's exemplary faith is so sincere that Satan has brought all the mayhem to Job's life as a test.

Francis Davidson's New Bible Commentary reminds us that Job's sufferings are actually, in this telling, "evidence of the divine [God's] confidence in him [Job]." Perhaps that's where some people get the idea to say inane things like, "When bad things happen, God must think we're up to the test." Thanks, but I'll skip the test.

The Book of Job illustrates how people in this primitive time engaged in intellectual thinking and pondering. There are some references to the prevailing idea of the time that "someone sinned—either you or your parents—to have caused this great suffering," which we now reject, but the dialogue back and forth between Job and his friends contains the following:

- Poetic and crisp descriptions: "God hung the stars in the sky" (9:9).
- Lovely metaphors: "A thing of dust that can be crushed like a moth" (4:19). "The wicked roar and growl like lions" (4:10).
- Vivid and homey illustrations: "What taste is there in the white of an egg?" (6:6). Really? So they enjoyed a good fried egg now and then?
- Thinking that plumbs the depths of their souls: "You see my fate and draw back in fear" (6:21). This is what makes it so hard to deal with the suffering and illness and even death of close friends and family: We know that our time is coming.

This is what makes it so hard to deal with the suffering and illness and even death of close friends and family: We know that our time is coming.

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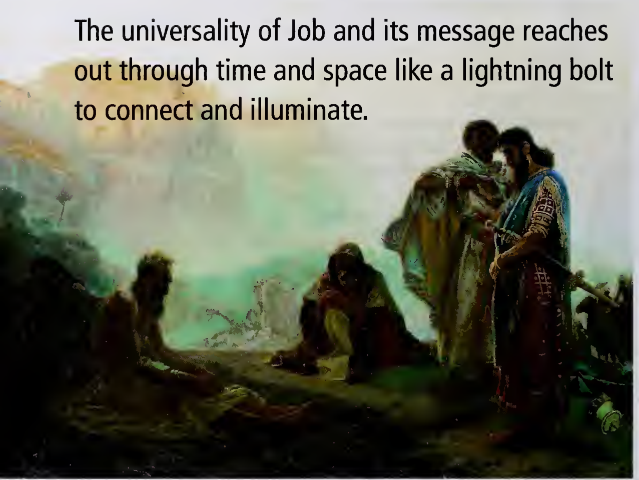
Job then asks God the question we can't blame him for asking: "Why use me for your target practice?" (Job 7: 20, Good News).

In the climax, (Chapter 32) we hear from a new voice, Elihu, who has apparently been biting his lips and, as the youngest, waiting for a chance to speak. He delivers some of the best advice, reminding us that when we feel God fails to speak to the problem of suffering, God does speak "again and again, no one pays attention to what he says" (33:14).

The universality of Job and its message reaches out through time and space like a lightning bolt to connect and illuminate.



Job And His Friends - Ilya Repin / wikiart.org

In a recent book, *The Book of Job: A Biography*, by Mark Larrimore (Princeton Press, 2013), the author summarizes the Elihu speech as reminding Job his case is not unusual: The innocent always suffer in our world. I like what Larrimore hints at in saying that suffering happens, but God always offers some resources to help us. That is the big takeaway for me in Job. Some suffering we can explain (war, famine, injustice), and we can work toward solutions but often don't. But when we can't explain why the innocent suffer, we must also remind ourselves to be part of offering to help out: to be there, to stand alongside, to cry with, to be quiet and listen, to bring a casserole.

Then right after Elihu, we hear again from God. I love reading this part aloud in my best theatrical thunderous, voice.

"Then out of the storm the Lord spoke to Job. 'Who are you to question my wisdom. …

'Does either the rain or the dew have a father?

'Who is the mother of the ice and the frost?

'Can you tie the Pleiades together?' " (38:2-40:2).

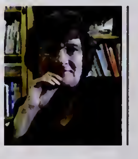
In God's comeback, Job's questions are not answered or even addressed, but we are left in awe and wonder about God. Job's health and good fortunes are restored, like the end of any good story.

In the epilogue to the Book of Job, his friends are restored to grace by Job praying for them and God asking that they present sacrifices for themselves. "I will answer his prayer and not disgrace you the way you deserve," the Lord says. "You did not speak the truth about me as he did" (42:7).

Job is commended for his questions, his outbursts, his truth seeking. And we ponder whether or not we can be angry with God, ask questions, and doubt? The conclusion of Job seems to say, Ponder no longer. It's OK to have doubts. I can take it. Just keep trusting, as Job did.

I must add a footnote. In 19:23, we read, "How wish that someone would remember my words and record them in a book! Or with a chisel carve my words in stone and write them so that they would last forever." The Davidson commentary pitches this as an indication that Job is frustrated with the response of his friends, that maybe someone in future generations will read about and understand his dilemma. How neat that we are doing just that.

However our communication occurs in the future, I have no doubt that God, Job and his friends will still speak into eternity on the unending questions regarding suffering, human coping and a master plan. The universality of Job and its message reaches out through time and space like a lightning bolt to connect and illuminate. That is the electric potency of God's Word.



Melodie M. Davis is a managing editor at MennoMedia, author and blogger at www.findingharmonyblog.com. She is a member of Trinity Presbyterian, a house-church-based congregation in Harrisonburg, Va.

Celebrating God's healing

by Karen K. Andres

Her addiction to painkillers had brought "Tammy" (not her real name) to this place in the chapel. Here others surrounded her. They, too, knew their own addictions, had their own stories and their own hopes for healing at Prairie View's Addictions Treatment Center in Newton, Kan.

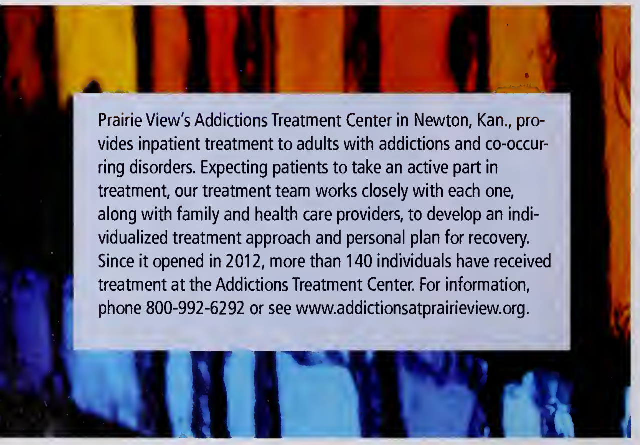
A chaplain describes spiritual ministry to patients at Prairie View's Addictions Treatment Center.

As stained-glass windows poured spots of orange sunlight onto the carpet, the chapel became a place of surrender for Tammy. "OK, it's you and me, God," she prayed. "Today is the day I admit that my life is unmanageable."

I met Tammy when she came to Prairie View for inpatient, residential treatment in the Addictions Treatment Center. During the first spirituality group she attended, I heard her story of becoming addicted to painkillers following a brain injury. This was heavy stuff for her. Her life had become unmanageable. She knew tears more than joy. Her addiction had taken over her life to the point that she had neglected her family. She felt she had become a nobody. Above all, she felt unworthy of God's love.

The litanies simply mark a sacred moment toward healing and point the way toward continued growth.

For our last session together as a spirituality group, I had invited Tammy and others who would be leaving the Addictions Treatment Center soon to physically symbolize the journey of their healing by participating in a symbolic healing ritual. Guiding the process, I had asked individuals ahead of time to design their own healing rituals.



Prairie View's Addictions Treatment Center in Newton, Kan., provides inpatient treatment to adults with addictions and co-occurring disorders. Expecting patients to take an active part in treatment, our treatment team works closely with each one, along with family and health care providers, to develop an individualized treatment approach and personal plan for recovery. Since it opened in 2012, more than 140 individuals have received treatment at the Addictions Treatment Center. For information, phone 800-992-6292 or see www.addictionsatprairieview.org.

Excited and motivated, Tammy had planned hers in detail. Earlier in the week, while on a walk with staff, Tammy instructed others to gather elements of nature. They would represent the transformation of her pain. They found a cactus, a flower, a stick, even rocks and dirt.

During the healing ritual, she explained the symbolism. The cactus and flower represented the transformation from sin to mercy. The forked stick showed religion transformed into ministry. Rocks and dirt represented her shame, guilt, blame and fear transformed into empathy, conviction, compassion and courage.

The song "Anoint Me, Lord" by Vicki Yohe played in the background: "Broken hearts and lives / Can be mended anew / Just with one touch, / Dear Lord, from you."

We watched, mesmerized, as Tammy poured water over the elements to symbolize a cleansing and letting go of the pain and the things that had blocked her healing for so long. She described her self-destruction as being transformed into a healthy body, mind and spirit; her earlier skepticism now a blossoming faith.

After Tammy shared, everyone gathered around her, and I anointed her. Hugs followed, and Tammy prayed, "Your Spirit in me weeps. These tears are familiar tears. They are Spirit tears. I will surrender to their work."

I first experienced healing litanies while taking a seminary class at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., taught by visiting instructor Tilda Norberg, founder of Gestalt Pastoral Care. Rooted in the Christian ministry of healing, Gestalt Pastoral Care integrates Gestalt growth work, spiritual companionship and prayers for healing.

My experience with personal healing litanies helps people celebrate their surrender to God's healing work. The litanies are not meant to fix the problem or cure a sickness. They simply mark a sacred moment toward healing and point the way toward continued growth.

Tammy is just one example of Prairie View's holistic approach to healing. As chaplain, I encourage clients to explore how their spirituality plays a role in their healing process. Healing starts with meeting people where they are. Because we are spiritual beings, our image of God affects how we make decisions and how we relate to others.

When clients first come to the Saturday spirituality group (which is specifically for those in the Addictions Treatment Center), I invite them to think of an image that describes their life before

Prairie View. One young man drew an arrow with a hand catching it. He explained that he was ready to grab hold of the things that cause pain in his life.

Having a willing spirit is a great first step and necessary one for healing to happen. Of course, not every client is open to having that discussion that brings challenges. Most individuals who have an addiction when they come to Prairie View know their lives are unmanageable and are seeking something or someone bigger than themselves to guide them.

Healing litanies provide clients with an opportunity to express and celebrate those healings. One client asked to throw eggs to symbolize breaking the shell of anger and pain. Another individual ran through a black sheet into the light; he carried a battery-lit candle while Chris Rice's song "Go Light Your World" was playing.

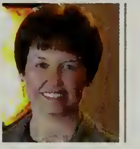
My goal is, first of all, to be a presence not only to those in the Addictions Treatment Center but to the other inpatients I counsel. When they arrive, many individuals are already dealing with shame and guilt, depression and anxiety. I want to mirror back to them the goodness I see in each of them and help them discover for themselves who they truly are. I tell these people, "You were loved even before your parents loved you, and there is this love that you can return to." I remind them that they are not their addiction.

I want to mirror back to them the goodness I see in each of them and help them discover for themselves who they truly are.

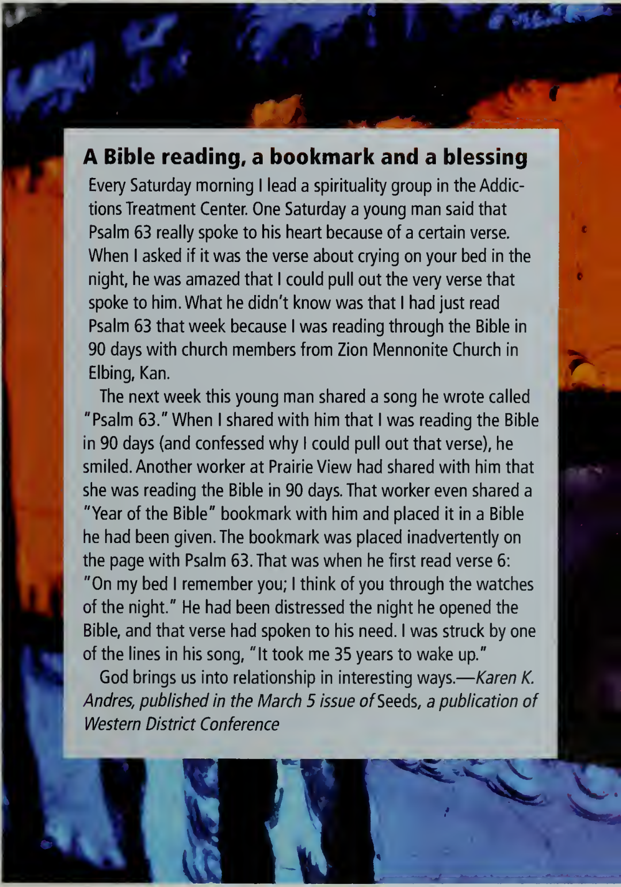
Through our time together, we talk about forgiveness, letting go, gratitude and a variety of topics. We write about our images of God. We talk about faith rituals we have experienced in our lives, such as Communion and baptism. We talk about alcohol and drugs and other addictions that have brought them here.

These people carry for me the blessing of God's belovedness. They remind me of my own spiritual poverty and that we all have challenges. My greatest joy is seeing their faces light up when they've learned a new revelation, whether in my group or from other Prairie View staff—the counselors, medical staff and recovery support staff. These people do the hard work of providing daily care and assist in the challenging task of helping clients become aware of their own reality.

After all, transformation is not about turning us into something we were not, but helping us discover for ourselves the people God created us to be.



Karen K. Andres is a chaplain at Prairie View and a member of Tabor Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.



A Bible reading, a bookmark and a blessing

Every Saturday morning I lead a spirituality group in the Addictions Treatment Center. One Saturday a young man said that Psalm 63 really spoke to his heart because of a certain verse. When I asked if it was the verse about crying on your bed in the night, he was amazed that I could pull out the very verse that spoke to him. What he didn't know was that I had just read Psalm 63 that week because I was reading through the Bible in 90 days with church members from Zion Mennonite Church in Elbing, Kan.

The next week this young man shared a song he wrote called "Psalm 63." When I shared with him that I was reading the Bible in 90 days (and confessed why I could pull out that verse), he smiled. Another worker at Prairie View had shared with him that she was reading the Bible in 90 days. That worker even shared a "Year of the Bible" bookmark with him and placed it in a Bible he had been given. The bookmark was placed inadvertently on the page with Psalm 63. That was when he first read verse 6: "On my bed I remember you; I think of you through the watches of the night." He had been distressed the night he opened the Bible, and that verse had spoken to his need. I was struck by one of the lines in his song, "It took me 35 years to wake up."

God brings us into relationship in interesting ways.—*Karen K. Andres, published in the March 5 issue of* Seeds, *a publication of Western District Conference*

What **Menno** got wrong and the **difference** it makes

Menno Simons' views about Christ affect our view of humanity and sexuality.

by Douglas Kaufman

Many Mennonites are aware that the man whose name we bear, Menno Simons, was considered an arch heretic by the Dutch authorities, so that he lived his life as a fugitive. What most of us do not know is that many of us today might also consider him a heretic for his view of the nature of Christ, or what is called Christology.

Tiffany Horst

Mennonites are not known for our fine theological distinctions, and perhaps this is partly due to the embarrassing stream of Christology that some early Dutch Anabaptists followed. The Dordrecht Confession, the Dutch confession that Swiss and German Mennonites gradually adopted as they migrated to America, refuses to be too specific about the nature of Christ, not wanting to offend one side or another in these discussions.

Why could we call Menno a heretic? In many ways he had an orthodox view on the nature of Christ. The early centuries of the church were full of debates about how to understand Jesus as both human and divine. Some sides emphasized his divinity and said he only seemed human while others emphasized his humanity and said God only made him divine at his baptism or resurrection.

Through these debates the orthodox view became that Christ is both fully human and fully divine. Athanasius wrote that God became flesh in order to reestablish the original pattern for human life, a life in God's image. By being both human and divine, Jesus faithfully demonstrated what God intended for human life. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus made a way for us to find new life.

Menno followed the earlier Dutch Anabaptist leader Melchior Hofmann and his fellow leader Dirk Phillips in affirming that Jesus was fully human and divine. But they added something that is not part of the orthodox view. They believed that Jesus did not receive his flesh from his mother Mary. God imparted to Jesus human flesh directly from heaven. In other words, Jesus shared human flesh with us but it was not flesh descended from Adam, like ours, but newly imported flesh from heaven. This is why it is sometimes called a "celestial flesh" Christology.

When I explained this to a Lutheran friend he asked, "What's the advantage of that?" And honestly I don't know or understand why Menno and his colleagues thought this was a helpful view. Menno was pessimistic about human nature but optimistic about the perfectibility of humans. Christians could become more like Jesus and follow his commands. Perhaps he saw this celestial flesh as the way Christ achieved this new humanity.

But how would it lead to optimism about Christians becoming more Christlike? We still have Adam's flesh, not Jesus' celestial flesh. So how can we be expected to live like Christ? Growing in Christlikeness came through regular participation in the Lord's Supper.

And here is the other puzzle to me in Menno's theology. I would expect Menno to have a high view of the Lord's Supper, much like the Roman Catholic view from which he came, that the bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ. This was the way Christians could come to share in the flesh of Christ. But no, he followed the more common Anabaptist understanding of the Lord's Supper as spiritually communing with the body and blood of Christ but without any transubstantiation of the elements.

So we are left with a Christ who mostly shares our flesh. We are called to live by the standards by which he lived, even though he was given a heavenly advantage that we do not have.

The orthodox view strives to have Christ fully share in our humanity "in every respect" so that Christ can, as Hebrews 2:17-18 says, "help those who are being tested." A Christ who inherited his flesh from heaven rather than from his mother does not share our humanity fully with us.

So Menno holds to the high ideals of Christ while also undercutting our ability to live by those ideals. Just as harmful is that this view of Christ teaches us that our humanity cannot be embraced. God had to bypass our flesh in order to bring salvation. While the orthodox view can teach us to embrace our bodies as the place where God's redemption takes place, Menno's view teaches us to suspect our bodies.

Menno holds to the high ideals of Christ while also undercutting our ability to live by those ideals.

Mennonite theologian Thomas Finger has the best statement and reflection on these issues that I have seen in his magisterial and encyclopedic *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology* (IVP Academic, 2004). He is both more nuanced and kinder to Menno and his companions than I am.

He ably connects Menno's view of Christ and the Lord's Supper with Menno's view of church discipline. For all Anabaptists, church discipline was a key element of renewing the church. But for Menno and other leaders around him, church discipline became extreme.

khrawlings / creativecommons.org

Because of our human nature inherited from Adam, the church must help people take on fully Christ's human nature. Sin by church members made evident that the Adamic nature had not been conquered by Christ's and so must be stridently disciplined.

> This suspicious view of humanity has helped mark Mennonites as a people who severely discipline and, when we do not agree, divide.

For the Dutch, this meant increasing use of the ban and shunning. This meant not only refusing sinners the Lord's Supper but also refusing to eat or even greet them. This eventually led to spouses and families no longer being permitted to live with the sinner.

This strict use of banning led the Waterlanders to depart from other Anabaptists, as well as factions among the Flemings and Frisians and even between the Swiss and Dutch. Menno excommunicated the entire Swiss Anabaptist church for refusing to agree with his approach to shunning. These differences also led to the only split within the Swiss church, with the Amish leaving other Swiss, who they thought had become too lax in discipline.

Finger summarizes perceptively: "The body, fo most Anabaptists, was so incorrigible that it could express the Spirit only when restricted by multiple rules. As a result, it often seemed that Anabaptist bodies, individual and corporate, were being not so much transformed by as clashing with God's Spirit, to the detriment of both."

I recognize that most Mennonites do not share Menno's Christology. But we have inherited his pessimistic view of human flesh, along with his high ideals for Christian living, which led to his overzealous church discipline. This suspicious view of humanity has helped mark Mennonites as a people who severely discipline and, when we do not agree, divide. These divisions have often turned on questions of our bodies, especially on clothing, gender and sexuality.

Menno's strange Christology is not the only reason Mennonites have struggled with discipline. We are not the only Christian church to wrestle with issues of a split between spiritual and material, sexuality and spirituality. But it has added a certain intensity to these debates in our history, an intensity we are experiencing once again in debates about LGBT concerns.

A more orthodox Christology invites us to embrace Christian existence as bodily existence. In Christ, God has joined us and sanctified our humanity. Christ saves us in our humanity and invites us to follow with the enabling grace and strength of the Spirit. We need not fear our bodies or our sexuality. This does not mean that anything goes, but it does mean that we will talk and work together on these issues rather than excluding and silencing one another.

Douglas Kaufman is co-pastor of Benton Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.

My lament

by Harvey Chupp

The last few months, I have been dealing with pancreatic cancer, which has forced me to do a lot of reflecting. My daughter helped me put into words my 50 years of ministry with the church and denomination that I respect and love. We reflected on five ministries that are both local and international that I had the blessing of being part of or initiating.

A former pastor longs for the Mennonite church to have respectful dialogue over divisive issues.

Harvey Chupp with one of the first baptized members in Chiluvuru, India. Photo provided

Harvey Chupp (left) and "Doc" Yarlagadda in the medical clinic chapel.

Photo provided

Over the years, I have had the privilege of attending five world conferences and dozens of general assemblies. I have experienced 50 years of loyalty to the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference. As I reflect on my long history with the Mennonite church, my positive memories and feelings are tempered by the fact that the church in 2014 is increasingly fractured by a handful of hot-button issues, issues that feel like Satan is using to destroy us from within.

> The experiences I have come to value involve situations where people of different cultures and beliefs try to reach across the divide to understand each other.

As I reflect on my life, I am struck that the experiences I have come to value involve situations where people of different cultures and beliefs try to reach across the divide to understand each other. Below are just a few examples.

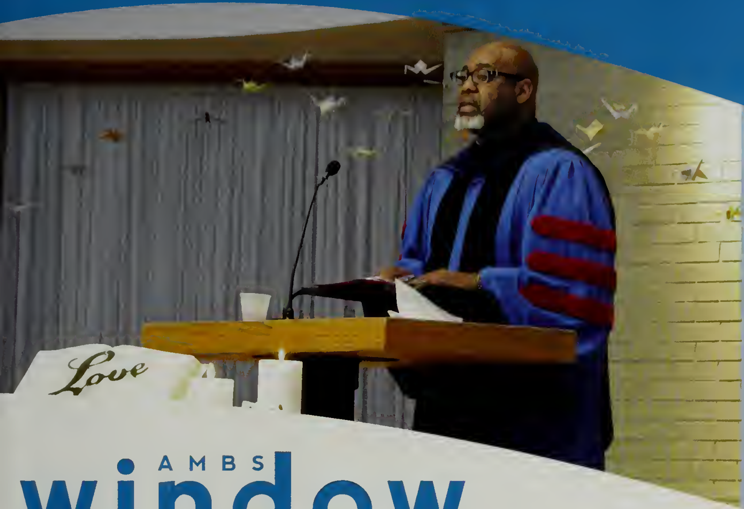
International students: In the 1970s, while pastoring a LaGrange County, Ind., church, I connected with Hosting International Services, based in Atlanta. I realized this program was onto something and wanted to pursue something similar in my area. The program not only found homes for international students over the holidays but served to bring people together from different parts of the world and deepen participants' understanding of each other. For the past 45 years, hundreds of international students have found their way to LaGrange County to stay with families, and many were introduced to Christianity for the first time.

Over the years, I have also been blessed to serve in a variety of capacities with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), including serving on the Great Lakes, national and binational boards. Each of these experiences has given me a window into the worldwide ministry of MCC. As a global organization dedicated to sharing God's love and compassion through relief, development and peace, MCC brings people together from all over the world. One of MCC's most abiding principles as it does this work is to encourage respectful dialogue among people from opposite ends of the world.

Locally, I have also found significance in dialoguing with people from different walks of faith. In the 1970s and '80s, as thousands of visitors flocked to my hometown of Shipshewana, Ind., to attend the flea market or see the Amish, I became aware of the many misperceptions people had about Amish and Mennonites' way of life and faith. I and others from our community began sharing our faith story to tourists out of our church fellowship hall. Dialoguing with others from a variety of faith traditions both deepened our own sense of who we were but also helped us learn the many commonalities among different religions. These conversations eventually evolved into the development of Menno-Hof Visitors' Center, a place that recently celebrated its 25th anniversary, hosting nearly a million visitors from more than 150 countries. As one Catholic visitor recently noted, "I'm convinced Menno-Hof exists as a significant piece in a movement propelled by the grace of the Holy Spirit for the restoration of unity among all Christians." (See "How I Met the Mennonites" by Beverly Schmitt at www.mennohof.org/php/whats.happening/reunion.php.)

Medical clinic: Attending Mennonite World Conferences in other parts of the world has al-

AMBS



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AMBS window

BEING COURAGEOUS

Sara Wenger Shenk, President

Maya Angelou died last month. Tributes to her filled the news. Folks remembered her as "an unstoppable force for art, justice and love" and that often she "drew on her faith as a source of strength to find beauty and perseverance in hard times."

Maya's voice lit up my spirit as I participated in closing events of this year, including the graduation of 35 remarkable students.

Maya said: "I believed that there was a God because I was told it by my grandmother and later by other adults. But when I found that I knew not only that there was God but that I was a child of God, when I understood that, when I comprehended that, more than that, when I internalized that, ingested that, I became courageous."

AMBS's teachers daily find ways for students to more fully comprehend, internalize, even ingest the "ah ha" that yes, we are children of God.

Diminished participation in church life, polarizing conflict on many fronts and widespread povery and injustice require unusual courage by those who offer themselves as leaders for God's reconciling mission in the world.

Graduating seniors spoke of their gratitude. One said: *The AMBS community impacts moral formation and character formation. They are inseparable. The longer I've stayed at AMBS, the more I've become completely convinced of that, because I see the community here and I see how my classmates have evolved. I see how I have evolved.... I know right now there's a ton of uncertainty within Mennonite Church USA ... which saddens me deeply. I pray fervently that regardless of what happens there will still be a way for people from all over to be a part of this beautiful community of believers.*

Another said: *My time here was a great experience. I think of the first day when the dean said, "I want you freshmen to know you are going to hear things that are different than what you're used to hearing." I was like "Really?" I wondered, "Do I actually belong here?" Then some of my reading started turning in me. I felt like I was ready to preach as soon as I got out of class. So I want to say to every single professor here that made me feel welcome, "I love you from the bottom of my heart. God bless you."*

With Maya may we together understand, comprehend, internalize and even ingest that we are children of God. That's what it will take to become courageous for persevering in hard times. ●

Photo above: **Commencement speaker James Logan, PhD, urged graduates to go forward wrapped in Christian love "with a wise mixture of toughness, gentleness, joy, courage, prudence, temperance, humility, mercy, and a very, very difficult peaceableness." Read more about commencement on page 7. Credit: Nekeisha Alexis-Baker**

AMBS Window is a publication of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary • www.ambs.edu

Thirty-five graduates honored

Thirty-five graduates were honored at the AMBS commencement service on May 24, 2014. They received the following degrees:

MDiv	*Master of Divinity*
MAPS	*Master of Arts: Peace Studies*
MATS	*Master of Arts: Theological Studies*

Certificates are noted with the information for individual graduates.

Graduates not able to be present for commencement are listed on page 6.

John Bender. *Certificate in Theological Studies.* Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference historian and retired writer-editor. He and Marty, his wife, are members of Prairie Street Mennonite Church.

Wilma Cender. *MACF; concentration in Christian spirituality.* Will expand her spiritual direction practice and provide pastoral care and counseling. Wilma and Karl, her husband, are members of Valparaiso (Ind.) Mennonite Church.

Sara Erb. *MDiv; concentration in theological studies.* Will begin an interim pastoral position in Ontario. Sara is a member of Steinmann Mennonite Church, Baden, and attends Belmont Neighborhood Fellowship, Elkhart.

Lawrence Giden. *Certificate in Theological Studies.* Will continue in the ministries he is doing at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Niles, Mich.

Julia Gingrich. *MDiv; concentration in pastoral ministry.* Will continue work with the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program at the Center for Community Justice in Elkhart and explore a pastoral ministry assignment. Julia and Josh Weaver, her husband, are members of Prairie Street Mennonite Church.

Adam Graber Roth. *MAPS.* Will serve for three years with Karen, his wife, in a Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Egypt. They will live in Beni Suef, teaching English as a Foreign Language and Peacebuilding.

Dianna Graham. *MDiv; concentration in theological studies.* Hopes to start a non-profit center called "Shalom Center." She is married to Willie J. Graham Sr. and is a member of New Light of Hope Christian Center Church of God in Christ in Elkhart.

Todd Gusler. *MDiv; concentration in Christian faith formation.* Pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment. Todd and Leah, his wife, have one child and attend Sunnyside Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Chaiya Hadtasunsern. *MDiv in dual degree program with Andrews University's Master of Social Work.* Will be pastor of Hmong Mennonite Church,

John Bender, Wilma Cender, Sara Erb, Lawrence Giden, Julia Gingrich.

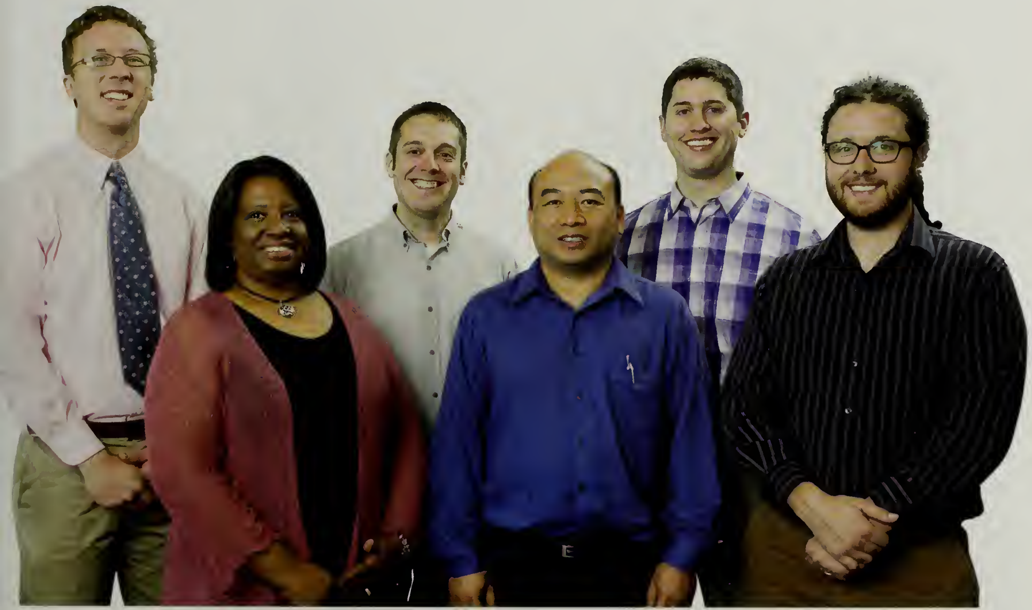
Denver, Colo. He and Aranya, his wife, have four children and attend Hively Avenue Mennonite Church.

Jeffrey Hochstetler. *MDiv; concentration in pastoral ministry.* Pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment. He is married to Kelsey Hochstetler. He is a member of Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio, and is an associate member of East Goshen Mennonite Church.

Kyle Metzger. *MAPS.* Will be ministry coordinator at Love in the Name of Christ in Huntington, Ind. He and Sharon Metzger, his wife, are members of 509 Community in Huntington.

Elizabeth Miller. *MATS; concentration in theology and ethics.* Exploring further study in religious history. She is married to Neil Richer and is a member of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Church.

At the Dean's Breakfast, graduate Eric Vandrick received the Marlin E. Miller award for excellence in theological studies from Lois Barrett, professor of theology and Anabaptist studies. Additional awards are announced on page 6.



Adam Graber Roth, Dianna Graham, Todd Gusler, Chaiya Hadtasunsern, Jeff Hochstetler, Kyle Metzger.

Lyle Miller. *MDiv.* Will continue as Pastor of Family Life and Financial Stewardship at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen. Lyle is married to Bonnie Miller.

Martin Navarro. *MDiv; concentration in theological studies.* Will begin an assignment with Mennonite Education Agency in Elkhart, providing program and administrative support and arranging and coordinating events. Martin is married to Viridiana Lopez-Soto and is a member of Comunidad Cristiana Vida Abudante, Cicero, Ill.

Lydia Nofziger. *MDiv; concentration in theological studies.* Will complete a pastoral assignment for a pastor on sabbatical this summer and then pursue a position in social service or teaching ministry in Columbus, Ohio.

Theophilus Odhiambo. *MDiv; concentration in Christian spiritual formation.* Pursuing a pastoral ministry or other service assignment. He and Agnes, his wife, have four children and are members of Hively Avenue Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Linda Short. *MDiv; concentration in pastoral care and counseling.* Pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment. She is married to LaVon Short and attends Zion Mennonite Church, Archbold, Ohio.

Katrina Mullet Siegrist. *MDiv; concentration in pastoral care and counseling.* Will do a Clinical Pastoral Education Residency at St. Joseph Regional Medical Center in Mishawaka. She is married to Brent Siegrist and attends Walnut Hill Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Kevin Swartzendruber. *MDiv; concentration in pastoral ministry.* Pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment. He is married to Angela Swartzendruber and is a member of North Goshen Mennonite Church.

Naomi Tice. *MACF; concentration in worship.* Pursuing a pastoral ministry assignment. She is a member of Springs Mennonite Church, Springs, Pa.

Eric Vandrick. *MATS; concentration in theology and ethics.* Will become manager of Mennonite Cooperative Bookstore at AMBS. Eric and Linsey, his wife, are members of Hively Avenue Mennonite Church.

Anita Yoder. *Certificate in Worship Leadership.* Will continue as Pastor of Worship and Music at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind. She is married to Randi Yoder. ●

Elizabeth Miller, Lyle Miller, Martin Navarro, Lydia Nofziger, Theo Odhiambo, Linda Short.

Chaiya Hadtasunsern completed two degrees this year, to add to the AMBS degree he already had. He completed the AMBS Master of Divinity degree and a Master of Social Work degree from Andrews University in a dual-degree program. In 2002, Chaiya received a Master of Arts in Mission and Evangelism and he was pastor of Hickory Hmong Mennonite Church in Hickory, N.C., before returning to AMBS.

After a trip to Thailand this summer to visit family and friends, Chaiya and Aranya, his wife, and their four sons will move to Denver, Colo., where Chaiya will become a part-time pastor of the Hmong Mennonite Church there.

Trina Siegrist, Kevin Swartzendruber, Naomi Tice, Eric Vandrick, Anita Yoder.

PANORAMA

Family members and the AMBS community surrounded Ted Koontz and Gayle Gerber Koontz to bless them at a June 5 event honoring them for 31 years of teaching at AMBS. On Ted's right is Peter Koontz, son; On Gayle's left are Tim and Sarah Koontz, son and daughter-in-law.

Retirements

Ted Koontz, professor of ethics and peace studies, and Gayle Gerber Koontz, professor of theology and ethics, are retiring this summer after teaching at AMBS for 31 years.

At a June 5 event, Sara Wenger Shenk, president, called Gayle "pioneer, priest, poet, passionate lover of God, beloved sister in Christ." Ted she described as "intrepid pilgrim, tenacious peacemaker, patient listener, humble servant, persistent prophet."

Short Courses for everyone

Anabaptist Short Courses—six-week, non-credit, online courses—begin a new series in fall:

- Exploring Anabaptist History and Theology, led by Jamie Pitts, PhD, Oct. 22 –Dec. 3

www.ambs.edu/anabaptistshortcourses

Pastors Week 2015

"Where culture blurs theology: What *is* an Anabaptist Christian" is the theme that four presenters will address:

- Greg Boyd, PhD
- Drew Hart, MDiv, PhD student
- Janet Plenert, MDiv
- Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, DMin

Visit **www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek** for details of the January 26–29 event.

Rooted and Grounded

Learn who's speaking at the September 18–20 conference on land and Christian discipleship and register at **www.ambs.edu/rootedandgrounded**

ALUMNI RECOGNITION 2014

Wilma Ann Bailey (Master of Divinity 1979) is a scholar who gives her gifts to the church, and for this AMBS honors her this year with the annual AMBS Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition.

Wilma followed her degree at AMBS with MA and PhD degrees from Vanderbilt University, and for 14 years she has taught Hebrew Bible at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis.

She also taught at Messiah College, Grantham, Pa., and directed the James Lark Leadership Program and taught at Goshen College. She was licensed for ministry in 1980 by Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, becoming the first woman to be licensed by the conference. She has served on boards of the Mennonite Church, Mennonite Central Committee, Philhaven (a mental and behavioral health care provider) and Eastern Mennonite University.

Wilma is a writer of both scholarly materials and Bible studies for the church. She wrote the Lamentations volume in the Believers Church Bible Commentary series to be released this fall, and earlier wrote *You shall not kill or You shall not murder: The assault on a biblical text* (Liturgical Press, 2005), in addition to many other books. She has published seven volumes of Adult Bible Study Guides published by Faith and Life Press and has another forthcoming, in addition to articles, essays and book reviews on topics related to peace and justice, women in ancient Israel, laments and the environment.

She has taught in other world contexts, including Chunnakam, Sri Lanka; Bulawayo, Zimbabwe; and at the Imam Khomeini Educational and Research Institute in Qom, Iran.

At AMBS, we look forward to Wilma joining the September 18–20 conference Rooted and Grounded: A conference on land and Christian discipleship. She also will be on campus to be honored for the Ministry and Service Recognition sometime in October. ●

BIBLIA
HEBRAICA
STUTTGARTENSIA

lowed me to witness the rich diversity that exists. In 1997, I joined a group led by Subbaroa "Doc" Yarlagadda to attend Mennonite World Conference in Calcutta, India. The main purpose of the trip was to explore the possibility of building a medical clinic in the village of Chiluvuru, the home village of Olga Yarlagadda. Today a clinic serves 80-90 people per day. A new believers' church has emerged at the clinic with 100 gathering twice weekly for worship. I had the rare privilege of baptizing the first four adult charter members. Leadership for this new fellowship is provided by new believers, including women.

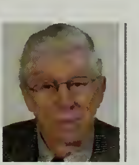
While reflecting on the unusual way God has used the simple and ordinary to accomplish great things, I am saddened, frustrated and angry at the way Satan is fragmenting my beloved church over a few hot-button issues. I am frustrated every time I hear of a family or church that feels the only solution to disagreement over several issues is to disassociate. Given the amazing and incredible bridges being built all over the world among people with far greater differences, I yearn for greater compassion and understanding in our own dialogues here at home.

I am reminded of an experience I had early on in my ministry involving Deacon Homer Miller in the early '70s. Our congregation was faced with one of the most divisive issues of the time—dealing with divorce in the Mennonite church. As our congregation faced its first request for membership from a divorced couple, J.C. Wenger warned me that it would be divisive, and he expressed skepticism that our church could come together on such a controversial issue.

Discernment: After a full year of discernment and careful Bible study led by John Steiner, Howard Charles and J.C.Wenger, the congregation came together with nearly a 90-percent vote in one direction. I will never forget the morning Deacon Homer Miller walked across the street to my office to discuss the matter before the church voted. He said: "Harvey, you know I can never vote in good conscience to accept this couple as members. However, if the congregation votes to accept them, I will submit to its wishes, and I want you to know as pastor I will never give you any trouble over this issue."

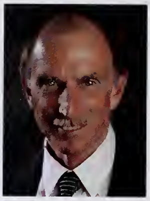
I yearn for greater compassion and understanding in our own dialogues here at home.

My respect and esteem for Deacon Miller remains to this day. Homer retained his conviction but honored his commitment to the larger fellowship, despite some serious disagreement. As our church continues to struggle with deep and divisive issues, I pray that more of us are able to act with Deacon Miller's integrity and grace.



Harvey Chupp is a member of Emma Mennonite Church in Topeka, Ind.

Of the church … in the world



Rick Stiffney is president/CEO of Mennonite Health Services Alliance and a member of Southside Mennonite Fellowship in Elkhart, Ind.

Our church-related institutions face profound challenges integrating faithfulness to core mission and values while adapting to changes in the environment. They operate with a foot in the community of faith and a foot in the marketplace. Both are turbulent. Sometimes the line between the two seems blurred. But why is intersection of mission and market of institutions important to readers of *The Mennonite*?

Our church-related institutions help our church continue to be in mission. Every day, thousands of residents, clients, patients, students, staff and families are served in the name of Christ. But this work is not straightforward.

Eastern Mennonite University's recent study of its hiring policy related to individuals in same-sex relationships illustrates the complexities our institutions face. EMU, Harrisonburg, Va., is not alone. Health and human services organizations, other schools and still other service ministries are wrestling with a broad range of issues related to policy and practice.

For 17 years I have served as president of Mennonite Health Services, a national network of health and human service organizations. For the last several years, I have also chaired the Goshen (Ind.) College board of directors and interacted with many of our schools. I have witnessed boards and executives making sense of their mission in the contexts of church and world. As tensions arise across the church and the marketplace changes, making sense of institutional mission becomes more challenging. This is not new. Institutions founded in the community of faith and serving in the larger world have always needed to integrate fidelity to mission and their deepest core convictions while adapting. This has always been risky. If institutions don't adapt, they fail. If they chase the market, they may lose their soul.

The nature of the relationship and influence between church and institution is shaped by different histories and local dynamics. At one time, the institutions could not have survived without the hands-on practical support of the church or its members. Today, the connection between the two is expressed in various programmatic, structural and policy provisions and often in the appointment of leadership. These help shape the institution's identity and inform how they address complex questions.

We need a church that supports 'mission' in its many expressions, including that of the institutions.

Jack Shea, a Catholic ethicist, observed that if church-related organization loses its grounding with the community of faith, in time its corporat mission and values may be clear but devoid of theological or churchly content. Institutions nee biblical/theological perspectives. Likewise, the church needs the ongoing witness of the institution and the ways institutions give back in support of the church. But what is the shape of meaningful engagement, exchange and influence

I suggest that institutions need the following:

1. Most importantly, we need a church that is strong, growing and committed to engagemen in the world. We need a church that supports "mission" in its many expressions, including tha of the institutions.

2. We need individuals willing to serve as trustees who are prepared to dedicate time and energy to bring thoughtful guidance to the work of the boards.

3. We need dialogue between church and institution. EMU's interaction with church constituents on a major policy question demonstrate engagement, listening and learning. It isn't easy, but it is strategic.

4. As institutions and church, we need to embrace interdependence. Who leads whom? Does the church set the direction or vice-versa? Both? Many of our executives and trustees are appointed by the church or represent the community of faith. But in turn, those leaders and their institutions have helped the church come to new understandings of faith, see new possibilities for mission and service. Such interdependence comes with some cautions. Institutions should no assume they know best. And the church needs to be careful not to use theological understandings or doctrinal formulations that shape congregational identity as a litmus test for the fidelity of an institution. The church and its institutions need each other. But they are not the same. The institutions are "of the church but in the world."

5. The leaders of our institutions need the encouragement of the church to make sense of faithfulness and effectiveness in a fast-changing world. There will be mistakes. There is need for grace as the church and its institutions each seek to be communities through which the healing and hope of Christ flows to the world. TM

Misconceptions and victim blaming

The decision of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Elkhart, Ind., and Mennonite Church USA to revisit the legacy of our most influential 20th-century Mennonite theologian, John Howard Yoder, has resulted in articles and responses in our church periodicals and elsewhere.

More will surely appear in the months to come. Therefore, I want to share several concerns. In common usage, "allegations" implies charges that are unsubstantiated and unproven. It is not appropriate to continue to use the term "allegations" in reference to Yoder's sexual abuse and immoral relations with women.

A church-appointed task force heard eight women's stories in February 1992, considered the evidence and determined that the charges were valid. I was one of those eight.

After we shared our stories, I went around the circle of church representatives and, calling them each by name, asked, "_____, do you believe us?"

Each responded, "Yes, I believe you." Subsequently the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference released a statement that said: "From this work the task force concluded that the reports are true and that Yoder has violated sexual boundaries."

The article "The Decision to Disinvite John Howard Yoder to Speak" (News Analysis, June) and the editor's note that preceded it both refer to "allegations" or to "alleged victims."

Since church and conference representatives had determined that the charges were true, it is not appropriate to continue describing them as allegations.

The same article perpetuates another misconception when it says, "Contributing to the silence was the fact that the women abused by Yoder did not come forward with their stories."

This is not true of many of the women. After confronting Yoder personally and telling him I wanted him to have no more correspondence or contact with me, I met personally with Marlin Miller, AMBS president, in 1983, to tell him of the way Yoder had tried to sexualize a relationship with me.

Miller told me he had heard from dozens of other women, some of them students at AMBS, with similar complaints.

Some of us had gone to conference and other church leaders with our concerns and continued to do so for many years.

Another misconception that has been reflected in articles and letters to the editor over the years is that the women who went to the seminary, church and conference leadership with our concerns about Yoder's behavior were anonymous.

The dozens of women who told Marlin Miller about their unwanted experiences with Yoder were known to him. Many had signed statements documenting these occurrences.

The women who in 1992 met with church and conference leadership sat face to face with them. We wrote a three-page document summarizing our experiences and listing eight steps we wanted the church to take.

Each of us signed her name. We were not anonymous.

It will never be known how many women around the world also experienced sexual abuse from Yoder but never had the courage, safety or means of going to the church or the seminary with their experiences, but I have heard such stories.

Too often frustration and anger have been directed at the women who complained of violence from our most influential peace spokesman.

Unless our concern is focused on what went so wrong in this story, on how Yoder was allowed to separate his personal ethics and behavior from his formal theology and still maintain a position of authority and respect within the church and on how victims' needs and concerns were trivialized and minimized for so many years, we risk re-enactment of this tragedy.

May God give us the courage and wisdom to learn what we must so that true repentance and healing may happen and that we may then become people of authentic peace and good news. TM

Too often frustration and anger have been directed at the women who complained of violence from our most influential peace spokesman.

Carolyn Holderread Heggen is a member of Albany (Ore.) Mennonite Church and author of *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches* (Wipf and Stock, 2006).

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Executive Board disapproves of Mountain States decision

The board will explore new structural models and survey ministers.

The Executive Board (EB) of Mennonite Church USA voted 16 to 2 to disapprove of the decision by Mountain States Mennonite Conference (MSMC) on Feb. 2 to license for ministry Theda Good, a pastor at First Mennonite Church in Denver who is in a committed same-gender relationship. All 18 members of the board met June 26–28 at the Four Points Sheraton O'Hare in Schiller Park, Ill.

The board spent the majority of its time together processing eight recommendations for action from a task force appointed in March to respond primarily to the MSMC decision. It agreed that MSMC failed to honor the relational covenants it made to the broader church in 2005 and invites MSMC to renew the commitments it made to affirm foundational church documents when it became a Mennonite Church USA area conference that same year.

The board also asked MSMC not to consider a request to ordain Good unless the Mennonite Church USA Delegate Assembly changes the stated polity on same-sex relationships.

Further, EB requests that no area conference license or ordain a person in a same-gender relationship and noted that such credentials (including Good's) would not be recorded in the national ministerial database unless the Delegate Assembly takes action to change the current polity.

The task force's report also took into account calls from the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) to discern ways to find unity in the midst of diversity across the church.

The task force met 12 times, and task force members Patricia Shelly, task force chair, and David Boshart also met in person in Denver with MSMC leaders.

The task force emphasized that, should Mennonite Church USA want to change its current covenant or documents, that change must be led by the Delegate Assembly and is not one that the Executive Board or an area conference can make on its own.

The final report approved by the board lists eight actions that will be implemented over the course of the next year, leading up to the 2015 Mennonite Church USA convention in Kansas City, Mo.

Included in these actions is an affirmation that the foundational documents serve as the guiding documents for Mennonite Church USA:

1. Vision: Healing and Hope statement
2. *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*
3. The Membership Guidelines
4. The Bylaws
5. *A Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership*
6. The statement on Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love
7. The current Purposeful Plan.

The board actions also include a commitment to develop new processes—including an exploration of new structural models—that will strive to find healthy ways to promote unity in Christ in the midst of diverse expressions of faith.

In a July 2 interview, Ervin Stutzman, executive director, said: "The only model that the Executive Board talked abou was a request from one of the area conferences if they could be in a fraternal relationship with Mennonite Church USA, rather than full members." He said the board "will likely appoint an ad hoc group to take a look at structural choices for different models."

The board will also launch a survey of all credentialed ministers in preparation for a time of discernment at the convention in July 2015.

In other business, the board approved guidelines for adopting resolutions at the 2015 Mennonite Church USA convention in Kansas City, affirmed sending a letter to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America as part of an ongoing process of reconciliation and ecumenical dialogue, heard reports from participants on the February/March Come and See Tour of the Israel-Palestine region and conducted a review of Everence, the stewardship agency of Mennonite Church USA.

Should Mennonite Church USA want to change its current covenant or documents, that change must be led by the Delegate Assembly.

Tyler Hartford, pastor at Pleasant View Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind., was appointed to the board for a one-year term, replacing Nancy Heisey, who resigned from the board earlier this year.

On June 26, the board met with members from several Chicago-area Mennonite congregations who shared stories of finding a place to belong and a theological home in Mennonite Church USA.

Board members also received a half-day of training in intercultural competency from Iris de León-Hartshorn, Mennonite Church USA director for transformative peacemaking.

Stutzman reported that EB expects to end the 2013–14 fiscal year at the end of July with a strong positive balance, thanks to increased donations from individuals and Mennonite Church USA agencies as well as staff efforts to reduce expenses.—*Mennonite Church USA staff, with Anna Groff*

EMU delays action on hiring policy

Listening process about hiring people in same-sex relationships shows diversity.

Andy Dula (left), chair of the Eastern Mennonite University board of trustees, and President Loren Swartzendruber, answer questions during a meeting on June 20.

After a six-month listening process that engaged a broad range of stakeholders, including Mennonite Church USA, the board of trustees of Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Harrisonburg, Va., has delayed formal action regarding the hiring policy and individuals in covenanted same-sex relationships.

EMU currently asks tenure-line faculty candidates to identify any objections they have to Mennonite Church USA's Confession of Faith. The listening process was instigated by the board after it heard interest by some faculty, staff, administrators and students about minority sexual orientation and its implication for access to employment.

The November 2013 board decision to suspend personnel actions related to the current hiring policy will remain in effect as discernment continues.

On June 20, Andy Dula, chair of the EMU Board of Trustees, offered appreciation to EMU President Loren Swartzendruber and his leadership team.

The president's cabinet invited a wide range of constituents—including students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, church leaders—to fill out survey forms giving their views on the hiring policy.

"More than 7,000 people responded to our survey," according to BJ Miller, director of institutional research.

In addition, 20 "dialogue sessions," including approximately 300 individuals on campus, were held.

At least one president's cabinet member was present at each session to listen and anonymously report perspectives to the rest of the cabinet. The president and cabinet members also engaged leaders across the church.

"The listening process was extremely valuable in enabling the president's cabinet to gain a deeper understanding of the range of feelings, hopes and fears about extending university employment to persons in same-sex covenanted relationships," added Dula.

According to Swartzendruber, "We solicited feedback through the listening process, not because it is a democratic process but because we felt it was important to hear from those who care deeply about EMU."

Swartzendruber confirmed that views proved to be highly divergent and often passionate, regardless of the stance. "We never expected to see consensus on this matter," said Swartzendruber. "We were hoping for respectful dialogue, and indeed this is what we saw within our university community. Internally there was a consistent theme of wanting to maintain unity in spite of our diversity on these and other important issues."

Dula said the board has no definite timetable for making a final hiring policy decision.

"Many of us from EMU will participate in the Mennonite Church USA's continuing discussions on human sexuality—we'll consider what emerges in the wider church in making our plans," he said.—*Bonnie Price Lofton of EMU with Tim Huber of* Mennonite World Review

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Border visit leads to immigration ministry

Casa de Paz provides shelter, food for families visiting detained workers.

Photo provided

First Mennonite
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Sarah Jackson, who coordinates a shelter for family members visiting detained undocumented workers, stands in front of First Mennonite Church of Denver.

An unexpected visit to the United States–Mexico border in 2009 transformed Sarah Jackson's mind and gave birth to a ministry.

Before then, Jackson would have referred to undocumented workers as "aliens" rather than neighbors that she now invites to stay in her home.

If asked how the United States should fix its immigration problem, she would have suggested the strangers be deported rather than befriended.

Back then, Jackson, who says she was living "the perfect life" in majority-white Colorado Springs, would have added her voice to those who say, "Build higher fences and beef up patrols to secure the borders." She probably would never have relocated to her current apartment in racially and ethnically mixed Aurora, near Denver, to be an advocate who galvanizes volunteers who help reunite immigrant families.

"At that time, I didn't care about immigration and didn't think it affected my life in any way," says Jackson, reflecting on her five-day educational trip to the border that led her to launch Casa de Paz (House of Peace) in 2012.

"Before the trip (which came at the invitation of Catholic Charities to various Christian denominations), it was easy for me to make quick judgments and assumptions about the people who were here without authorization," says Jackson. "But it's a different story when you're eating dinner with a hard-working man who basically grew up in the United States but is just trying to get back to his family after being deported. I realized that this was a real issue affecting real people, not just a random story I was hearing about on the news."

Through Casa de Paz, Jackson provides shelter and foo for family members visiting detained undocumented immigrants. They stay in Jackson's one-bedroom apartment, which she specifically rented across the street from the Aurora Detention Facility.

> I realized that this was a real issue affecting real people, not just a random story I was hearing about on the news.—Sarah Jackson

Jackson hosts women and children. She gives up her bedroom (and sometimes her entire home) to them and sleeps on the couch or at the nearby home of her sister, Anna Jackson. Through the Casa de Paz network of local volunteers, Jackson calls male friends who provide immigrant men with food and shelter, especially for those who have been released by the detention center and have nowhere to go.

On average, Jackson hosts about eight people a month, for several days at a time. She finds out about people in nee of help through word of mouth, such as from immigration lawyers.

The ministry is supported by individuals and congregations of the Mountains States Mennonite Conference and other groups.

Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Mission Networ offer support through shared staff in the Holistic Witness team, which empowers grass-roots leaders to become entrepreneurial and radical in their commitment to peacemaking, evangelism, service, church planting and justice.

Jackson hears firsthand stories of people, primarily from Mexico and Central America, who make long, dangerous trips north in order to provide for their families. The people come north in part because of free-trade agreements, made by the U.S. government and neighboring countries, which have led to the displacement of many agricultural workers i Latin America as well as manufacturing workers in the United States.

Jackson hears stories of beatings, robberies and rapes. She hears of families torn apart. Yet the immigrants' optimism toward America, hope in God and love of family radiates from nightmares, she says.

"The Bible has a lot to say about immigrants," Jackson says. "I grew up in the church and I never heard anything about welcoming a stranger in your land or that tithing was also about leaving food behind for the orphans so that they would not starve."

"Seeing the love that the people have for their families—the perseverance and patience and strength—these are the types of people we should want to stay in this country and be our neighbors," Jackson says. "It would be a more beautiful country if they were able to stay and be free. That's not something I would have imagined saying five years ago."

There are an estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the United States. Of Aurora's population of 340,000, about one in five residents were born in countries such as Russia, Mexico and Ethiopia. More than 100 languages are spoken in the public schools. According to published reports, immigrants have reported feeling isolated and underrepresented. The city is considering opening an Immigrant Welcome Center that would offer help or information in areas such as housing, employment and education.

"I believe Sarah Jackson is doing the work that every church should be doing," says Jaime Lázaro, outreach minister for Mountains States Mennonite Conference. "To do something like this, one has to have experienced a powerful life transformation, a divine touch and a new conversion. Sarah is only just beginning the great task that God has prepared for her."

Casa de Paz receives support—ranging from money to clothing and food drives—from individuals and area congregations, such as First Mennonite Church of Denver, where Jackson attends. However, Jackson admitted to having difficulty asking for financial support.

To do something like this, one has to have experienced a powerful life transformation, a divine touch and a new conversion.—Jaime Lázaro

"I'm really bad at asking for money because I get embarrassed," she says.

So she found another way. She formed a league called Volleyball Latino, where more than 50 teams pay $200 each to play, knowing the proceeds will help support Casa de Paz. The league has also become a ministry of sorts, bringing together white and Hispanic players.

"A lot of people, who would normally not be in the same building together are now forming relationships and going to each other's birthday parties," Jackson says.

"Sarah seems to combine a compassionate heart and a hands-on attitude to respond to the needs of her immigrant neighbors," says Mauricio Chenlo, denominational minister for church planting for Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Church USA. "She is an example of missional leaders who are risking entrepreneurial initiatives to engage those who have been marginalized."

Jackson shares a story about an undocumented worker named Tony (his last name is withheld to protect his privacy), who had been in the detention center a few years. He was released after it was determined that he was not a threat. Through friends of Casa de Paz, Tony had been receiving visits while he was detained. The friends helped him rebuild his life after he was released. They held a birthday celebration for him.

"At his birthday party he had a big smile on his face," Jackson says. "I teared up. These were people who had taken the words of Jesus—to love your neighbor as yourself—very seriously. They were good people who knew the right thing to do.

"Five years ago, I didn't know anything about [immigration]. Now look at what I'm doing. It's not just me. There is this huge community of volunteers who are helping people. They are making sure that our guests feel that they matter."—*Wil LaVeist of Mennonite Mission Network*

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A Mennonite light in isolated Albania

Klementina Shahini chooses the Mennonite faith and later starts a school.

Klementina Shahini admits she didn't know what she was getting into when she raised her hand at an evangelistic meeting.

"My husband raised his," she says, "and like a good Muslim wife I did the same."

From that reflex gesture some two dozen years ago, she and husband Dini became the first Mennonites in Albania and went on to form the first Mennonite congregation in the notoriously isolated nation.

Today, Klementina has become an educational entrepreneur, founder and principal of the Lezha Academic Center in Lezha, Albania.

Klementina Shahini

Albania used to be the most isolated country in the world, known as a hard-core Soviet satellite. "For 50 years everything was controlled, even who one could marry," says Klementina. "People could be jailed just for saying a wrong word; some were killed for nothing. Our dictator learned from Stalin but was worse."

Her own family was persecuted. "My sister was put in jail for 10 years, and I spent many years in labor camps."

When the Soviet Union collapsed in the early 1990s, communist control in Albania eased, and doors opened to Christian visitors.

One group included Mennonites from Harrisonburg, Va. Though Klementina and Dini were Muslims, they decided to attend one of the group's events. "When Dini raised his hand at an evangelistic meeting, I did, too, to follow him," says Klementina. "We became Christians."

Klementina, then in her early 30s, got a job in a library and studied English. More Mennonites showed up, and Klementina helped them hand out Bibles. When a local group was created, Dini and Klementina were asked, "Can you keep this group together?"

Before long she and Dini became the first baptized Mennonites in Albania. A Mennonite church was formed.

"Our lives changed completely," says Klementina. "We were getting blessing after blessing, every day."

Another abrupt change followed during the civil uprising in 1997. The Shahini family—Christians from the north who were now planting a church in the south—suddenly found themselves in danger. They fled to Greece, then moved to the United States.

Settling on the eastern seaboard, the Shahinis connected with local Mennonites. Klementina got a job in a private Christian school and enrolled at Regent University in Virginia Beach, Va., where she obtained a master's degree in educational leadership. Her thesis, on how to start a Christian school, would serve her well.

A mentor urged her to go back home and start a Christian/Mennonite school. Her husband and children supported the idea. "Virginia Mennonite Missions and a group of people who loved mission and education said they would stand behind me," she says.

So in 2011, Klementina gave up her English department chair position at Portsmouth Public School, and Dini le his job at the Christian Broadcasting Network.

"We moved back to Albania, and I became principal of a school that was not yet established," she says. "They were crazy days. We had nothing, just the vision and the people who supported us."

One day an email arrived from a Christian school in Florida. "We have some books," it said. Then a Mennonite school in Germany offered furniture. Don Steiner, a professor at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and chair of the Lehza board, had more good news: "I think we have found some teachers, just graduated."

"The pieces fell together," says Klementina. "By the end of June 2011 we had four teachers, books and furniture. But we had no license to operate. People were coming from the United States for the inauguration, and we had no license."

Two days before the opening ceremony, the government education department called to say the license had been granted.

"I screamed," says Klementina.

The school opened in September 2011 with five students

"We started by teaching them English. By the first day of regular school we had 31 students."

None of the students was a Christian, but they sensed an opportunity for a better education.

"Classes are overcrowded in Albania," says Klementina. "They lack materials. The quality of teaching is poor."

The first year was stressful. "Every morning I had fear—what if a teacher gets sick?" she recalls.

They started with Bible clubs, which most of the students attended despite being Muslims.

"We build relationships," says Klementina. "We build trust. In Albania, people don't trust easily."

The school now has 85 students in grades 7 to 12. Besides the perpetual need for finances, a big need is teachers. Last year, 15 students were turned away because of a teacher shortage.

Winnipeg businessman Arthur DeFehr, who with his wife, Leona, founded Lithuania Christian College (now called LCC International University) in the 1990s, heard about Lehza school and came to visit. That encounter sparked connections not only with the college but with Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Last year, five Lehza students went to Lithuania to continue their education, and this summer, LCC International University is sending representatives to Albania to offer summer programs at Lehza. Seven Lehza students have also been accepted at CMU for this fall.

Lehza Mennonite Church, the only Mennonite congregation in the country, now numbers about 50 people. It meets in a converted bar.

Both the school and the church have their work cut out for them. The continuing struggle with Islam and communism is not to be taken lightly.

Klementina says the Mennonite emphasis on peace and justice is sorely needed in her country. "People came out of communism with so much anger," she says. "We don't have churches and counselling services to deal with this. We have no tradition of that kind of resource."

She is determined to make a difference.

"We are there to change the culture and to change people's lives. We want the school to be a light to the city, and then to all of Albania."—*Wally Kroeker*

New friends at New Life Mission

After-school program helps kids in poverty build new relationships.

When Destiny Ducommun's parents decided to move her family from Alberta to New Brunswick, she thought they were crazy. "I actually had gotten friends, I was starting to get settled in, I had a life," says the 12-year-old. And since her family moved to Hillsborough, New Brunswick, she's had trouble making friends in her neighborhood and school.

For a girl of only 12, she's candid about the situation. When asked who she hangs out with at school, she answers simply, "No one. I'm a loner."

But things are different when she's at New Life Mission, an after-school program at Hillsborough Baptist Church that is supported by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). Ducommun started attending after finding a notice in her church bulletin about a sledding day, and afterward they invited her to come to regular events on Mondays and Thursdays.

"It was fun," she says. "It gave me something to do, and I actually made friends." At New Life she met Sarina Jones, and now the two often ride the bus together. "If it weren't for New Life, I wouldn't even know her," says Ducommun.

The kids who attend New Life Mission, between 10 and 12 of them each day, have formed strong bonds of friendship, says Jennifer Jones, who runs the New Life Mission location in Hillsborough. "They have that compassion and that love for each other," she says, "It's a very open, welcoming group, but it's their own group."

Once Ducommun finished grade five, the age limit for the program, she became a junior leader in order to keep attending. Junior leaders help prepare snacks, clean up and play with younger kids. "I know this is odd, but I mainly like to help out, play with Sarina maybe, and then do dishes. I like to do dishes for some reason," Ducommun says.

Having older children return as junior leaders allows them to develop leadership skills and proves that New Life meets their needs. "To see them grow up to become alumni and still want to come back, it shows to me there must be something good here," Jones says.

Aside from fostering friendships, the drop-in also helps families who are struggling financially. The program in Hillsborough started after several churches in the area approached New Life Mission in Moncton and asked for a satellite location to address the need in their area. Hillsborough is a low-income region with high unemployment.

New Life Mission is one way to create change for the next generation in the area.

When kids attend New Life Mission in Hillsborough, they go home with several loaves of bread or buns, and they receive boxes of food at Christmas. The staff and volunteers also try to connect families with local services, such as the Tele-Drive program that provides affordable rides for people without vehicles.

Jones says New Life Mission is one way to create change for the next generation in the area; it's a way to "help end that cycle of poverty so the kids can feel positive," she says, "and to give them that self-confidence to go find that job when they graduate."—*Emily Loewen, staff writer for Mennonite Central Committee Canada*

Discernment group on sexual abuse meets

Four initiatives have emerged for the coming year.

The Discernment Group, convened by Mennonite Church USA to address issues related to sexual abuse, met June 3 in Elkhart, Ind. Carolyn Holderread Heggen is an advisor to the group, and historian Rachel Waltner Goossen is researching Mennonite institutional responses to reports of John Howard Yoder's sexual violations in the 1970s, '80s and '90s. Several initiatives have emerged.

1. Documenting the scope of Yoder's abuse and the church's response to it. An issue of *Mennonite Quarterly Review* focusing on sexual abuse in Mennonite contexts is planned for early 2015. It will include an article by Goossen on Mennonite church institutional responses to Yoder's sexual abuse of women. In the meantime, the group has discovered from previously unexamined institutional and personal files, including memos by Yoder himself, additional evidence of sexual violation perpetrated by Yoder on many women, including students, missionaries, church workers and others. The group is learning how long it took church leaders to intervene effectively. There are documented reports of sexual violation by Yoder, including fondling and sexual intercourse. In some instances, women who engaged in sexual encounters were persuaded, at least initially, by Yoder that such behavior was permissible between Christian "brothers" and "sisters." Many others resisted his unwanted advances and were perplexed and distressed by his pursuit.

While a four-year church accountability process for Yoder began in 1992, doubt lingers about its outcome since little about this process was communicated to the public. In 1996, when the process concluded, recommendations were made for "the continuing use of an accountability plan" and that "the church use [Yoder's] gifts of writing and teaching." Also, little has been communicated about the prolonged and devastating impact Yoder's sexual abuse has had on many women. There is much for the church to lament about the harm inflicted on these individuals, as well as the grief experienced by family members of all involved and by colleagues and administrators who tried to call Yoder to account.

While much of the Mennonite institutional processes that focused on Yoder was not shared publicly, Mennonite Church USA is now committed to transparency in this matter. In 2015, all previously unavailable written materials made available for this historical documentation process will be deposited and available to researchers at Mennonite Church USA's historical Archives.

2. Planning seminars and a service of lament. Planners of the Mennonite Church USA convention have agreed to make space for a public worship service of lament at the 2015 biennial meeting. The Discernment Group has begun conversation about what the service might include and who we might invite to plan and lead the service. It has also begun to identify seminars on sexual abuse prevention and related matters, including a report and discussion of what's been learned in documenting church responses to Yoder.

3. Restoration and healing. The group is exploring ways to enable restoration and healing for those who have suffered sexual abuse particularly those who have suffered abuse by church leaders, such as Yoder, who were not brought to account in a timely manner by the church.

4. Drafting a statement on sexual abuse. On behalf of the Executive Board, the Discernment Group has begun drafting a general statement on the nature and prevention o sexual abuse. The statement will be presented to the Constituency Leaders Council for approval as a study document in the church, and then for approval by the Delegate Assembly at the 2015 biennial meeting in Kansas City, Mo.

Concerned people may contact the Discernment Group. Carolyn Holderread Heggen and Linda Gehman Peachey are available for conversation with victims of Yoder who wish to report their experiences or receive counsel.—*Mennonite Church USA*

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YAMEN experience feeds passion for helping children

Rut Arsari of Indonesia spends 11 months serving in Bogotá, Colombia.

Photo provided

YAMEN participant Rut Arsari of Indonesia (left) with Leticia Stucky, her host mother in Bogotá, Colombia

Within days of her arrival in Bogotá, Colombia, on Aug. 21, 2013, for her YAMEN term, Rut Arsari knew it would be difficult for her to leave. The wonderful people she would meet and the close relationships she would develop would make it hard to say goodbye.

Arsari, from the congregation GITJ Kelet, part of the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) member church Gereja Injili di Tanah Jawa in Indonesia, served with the Young Anabaptist Mennonite Exchange Network (YAMEN), for 11 months with the MWC member church, Iglesia Cristiana Menonita de Colombia. YAMEN is a joint program between MWC and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

Each week, Arsari assisted in three different programs managed by the Teusaquillo Mennonite Church in Bogotá. During the week, she assisted at two different food programs for children in the marginalized neighborhoods of Los Pinos and San Nicolás, which have high numbers of families that have been forcibly displaced by the violence. On Saturdays, Arsari worked with a program that provides food for street people in a low-income neighborhood of Bogotá.

What impacted Arsari most were the relationships she built with people through her involvement in these communities and congregations. She attended Teusaquillo Mennonite Church with her host family, Peter and Leticia Stucky. Peter is the head pastor of the congregation. They welcomed Arsari like a member of their family, she says.

Another way the church community impacted her was to see and hear how the members openly share about their faith, struggles and joys. Arsari says that hearing people verbally acknowledge the presence of God in their lives made her more aware of the work of God in her own life.

Not only did she connect with church members and volunteers of these programs but also with many of the children that attend every day.

Through serving meals and teaching English classes, Arsari got to know and learn from the children who come from a different background from hers. She learned new ways to teach and interact with children, to play with and discipline them when needed. These children also taught her new ways of understanding and viewing the world around her: to appreciate what she has, to have a humbler attitude and to find joy and hope in unexpected places.

For several years, Arsari has had a passion and a vision for helping children. She dreams of one day opening a home in Indonesia to welcome, care for and love children that do not have family to care for them. For Arsari, her assignment in Colombia is the first step of the journey to this dream.

Participating in the YAMEN program has opened Arsari's mind to new perspectives, to seeing the world around her through the eyes of others and to a deeper experience with God.—*Kristina Toews of Mennonite World Conference*

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From Kenya to Harrisonburg, Va., in pursuit of peace

Kaltuma Noorow and Caleb Hinga follow in their mothers' footsteps.

David Everett

Kaltuma Noorow (left) and Caleb Hinga lived only 30 minutes apart in Kenya, yet these two students met for the first time at Eastern Mennonite University, where they discovered a closer connection than geographic proximity.

Their neighborhoods in Nairobi, Kenya, were only 30 minutes apart. Yet these two students traveled more than 7,500 miles to meet for the first time at Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) in Harrisonburg, Va., where they discovered a closer connection than geographic proximity.

At the end of her first EMU semester, Kaltuma Noorow had a casual conversation with Caleb Hinga, then a sophomore. She mentioned her mother's name—Dekha Abdi. Instantly Caleb made a connection, "You're Dekha's daughter."

Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, a Somali-Muslim woman who was internationally recognized for her peace work, had been his mother's inspiration at EMU's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding (CJP).

Caleb's mother, Waringa Hinga, had earned a CJP master's degree in the spring of 2011. Kaltuma's mother was a student at the Summer Peacebuilding Institute (SPI) in 1998 and 2009 and an SPI instructor in 2011. She died in an automobile accident weeks after returning to Kenya in 2011.

"I don't want her dream to die," says Kaltuma, a rising junior majoring in peacebuilding and development. Kaltuma is the eldest of Abdi's four children, aged 11 to 22 when their mother died. When one of her mother's friends encouraged Kaltuma to consider studying at EMU, she stopped at three years of architecture studies at a Kenyan university to start over in Harrisonburg.

Some of her EMU classes are taught by her mother's former professors. Kaltuma hopes to one day earn a CJP master's degree. And she wants to connect her love of architectural design with her passion for peacebuilding—she's hoping to take a new course at this year's Summer Peacebuilding Institute, "Peace by Design: Architecture and Design as a Peacebuilding Practice."

Kaltuma lived four years in Birmingham, England, with her family and has traveled to Ethiopia, Uganda, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam, plus many western European countries. "I have wanderlust," she says. "When I first arrived in Harrisonburg, EMU looked pretty small. I'm a city girl."

In her first year here, Kaltuma quickly identified a cultural trait of her fellow students—a cool reticence in class discussions. "They chose their words so carefully for fear of being misunderstood. I was the one who freely said what was on my mind, and I had to adjust. I didn't want to be the annoying person who talks too much in class."

She describes herself as a "visual learner. I'm so bored reading textbooks. I'm asking, How can I practically apply this?"

One skill she wants to see expanded from a two-day workshop at CJP to a semester-long course is instruction in "how to talk to donors, how to write grants for funding."

The work her mother began, Kaltuma is preparing to con tinue. She has already gained much practical experience in the field through her mother's network of friends and assoc ates, working alongside them in Uganda and Southeast Asia

Fellow Kenyan Caleb describes a similar journey, prompted by his mother to come to EMU. "She saw leadership abilities in me, but I wasn't using them in positive ways," he admits.

Three years later and a rising senior in computer science Caleb is glad he followed his mother's advice. "I was studying mechanical engineering in Kenya. My physics class had 700 students; the teacher was projected on a big screen. Here, classes are small. The teacher knows if you're slacking. They know your strengths and weaknesses," he says.

He and Kaltuma lead the International Student Organiza tion; he served as president this school year and she as vice president, rising to president next school year.

The 7,500 miles separating Caleb from his homeland are quickly leaped each weekend with a two-hour phone call to his parents. "I'm much closer to my mom now than when I was back home. She challenges me when I jump to conclusions too quickly."

Caleb knows he'll be a different person when he ultimately returns to Kenya in a year or two. "I'll go back a more outgoing person. I've learned how to relate to all kind of people in a good, respectful way, even those who don't u derstand me easily."

Before he returns, Caleb wants to achieve one more wis of his mother. "She always wanted me to take peacebuildin classes," he says. "Next spring, I hope to take the restorative justice class."—*Paul Souder of EMU*

Wilma Ann Bailey receives recognition from AMBS

Scholar and teacher to receive the Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition

Wilma Ann Bailey is a scholar who gives her gifts to the church, and for this, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., honors her this year with the annual AMBS Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition.

BIBLIA
HEBRAICA
STUTTGARTENSIA

Wilma Ann Bailey

Bailey earned a Master of Divinity degree from AMBS in 1979 and followed this with a Master of Arts and Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University. For 14 years she has taught at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. In 2010, she was awarded the title Minnie Vautrin Professor of Christian Witness in recognition of her work related to peace and justice issues.

Prior to this, she taught at Messiah College, Grantham, Pa., and taught and directed the James Lark Leadership Program at Goshen (Ind.) College. She was licensed for ministry in 1980 by Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, becoming the first woman to be licensed by that conference. She has served on boards of the Mennonite Church, Mennonite Central Committee, Philhaven and Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va.

Bailey is a prolific writer of both scholarly materials and Bible studies for the church. She is author of the *Lamentations* volume in the Believers Church Bible Commentary series, to be released this fall, of *'You Shall Not Kill' or 'You Shall Not Murder': The Assault on a Biblical Text* (Liturgical Press, 2005) and many more books. She also has published seven volumes and has another forthcoming of Adult Bible Study Guides through Faith & Life Press, in addition to numerous articles, essays and book reviews on topics related to peace and justice, women in ancient Israel and laments, and the environment.

Bailey has published seven volumes and has another forthcoming of Adult Bible Study Guides.

In addition, she has taught in other world contexts, including four concentrated courses at Christian Theological Seminary in Chunnakam, Sri Lanka, a seminary reviving its program after nearly 30 years of civil war. She participated in an agricultural project sponsored by the Brethren in Christ Church in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, and lectured on land and land use in the Bible and theologies of the land in the Bible in 2009. Also that year, she spoke at the Mennonite World Conference in Asunción, Paraguay, on "The Earth Belongs to the Lord."

Bailey will return to AMBS twice this fall. At the Rooted and Grounded conference, Sept. 18–20, she will present a paper, "Who Gets to Eat in the Garden of Eden?" In October, she will receive the alumni recognition and share with the campus community about her ministry.—*Mary E. Klassen of AMBS*

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Police attack Mennonite gathering in Vietnam

All 76 in attendance taken to a police station, 20 require medical attention

Security police assaulted a large group of pastors and theological students gathered in their church center at a provincial town just north of Ho Chi Minh City in June. The attack came on the eve of a renewal conference and graduation ceremonies for students of a theological training program.

The Evangelical Mennonite Church, a church not officially registered in Vietnam, was meeting June 9-11 at its three-story church center in Ben Cat town in Binh Duong province. Most of the pastors had already arrived.

After all had retired for the night on sleeping mats laid out on the floor, police loudspeakers called for Le Thi Phu Dung and Tran Minh Hoa to open the door for an "administrative investigation." Pastor Phu Dung is president of the church and wife of former president Nguyen Hong Quang. Hoa is the pastor of the congregation that meets at the center.

A few minutes after the order was given, security police broke down the door. Large numbers of men stormed the building, assaulting students and church leaders. All 76 people were taken in trucks to a police station.

According to extensive reports by Pastor Quang, the invading police produced no warrants and gave no reason for the beatings and the arrests. Police agencies searched the premises, destroying some property. Police reportedly incited "onlookers" to throw stones at the building, breaking windows and roof tiles. Church leaders estimated the attacking force at more than 300 people.

By 6 a.m. all had been released. Of those who were beaten, 20 required medical attention.

Attacks continue

For several days after the raid, gangs continued attacking the building, throwing bricks, stones and rotten eggs. Front rooms had to be evacuated. People coming to the center were stopped and searched—some had cell phones and motorbikes confiscated. Many were told to leave the area and never come back. Electricity and water were cut in the area.

Most of those arrested were summoned to the police station later for further investigation. Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang was summoned June 12 to appear at the police station to face charges of "resisting administrative investigation and slandering authorities carrying out their duties."

Trained in law, Quang recognized this as an illegal order and ignored it. The next day he was ordered to appear on charges of "resisting administrative investigation and local disorderly conduct." At the police station Quang met some officials sympathetic toward him.

Religious groups are required to inform local authorities of meetings. Pastor Hoa had reported the evening before the raid that 29 pastors were coming and that he was planning to submit a complete report the next morning.

With no resolution at the local level, leaders petitioned higher authorities about the abuses of their rights under Vietnamese law.

They sent a "petition of accusation" signed by 58 church leaders to the minister of public security and to the head of the Peoples' Investigative Bureau. It details five charges against police, including entering without a warrant, arresting and abusing children, using guns to terrorize defenseles students and pistol-whipping people within the holy confine of a church building.

An ongoing issue

While incidents like this occurred frequently in Vietnam decade or two ago, the government has improved its record on human rights and religious freedom. One segment of Vietnam's Mennonite community was granted official status as the Vietnam Mennonite Church in 2008. Led by Pastor Nguyen Quang Trung, this church became a member of Mennonite World Conference in 2009.

Leaders petitioned higher authorities about the abuses of their rights under Vietnamese law.

Nguyen Hong Quang served as president of the other group, referred to as the Evangelical Mennonite Church, or Mennonite Church in Vietnam. Each group has about 5,000 members, and each has adopted the same Mennonite Confession of Faith.

Pastor Quang has called on local authorities to respect the national constitution and people's right to religious freedom. In 2004, he was arrested and convicted, with five othe church leaders, of "preventing a police officer from carrying out his activities," a catch-all charge once often levied against religious leaders. Sentenced to three years in prison he was granted amnesty after 14 months, following an international appeal for his release.

As part of the government's program of controlling the activities of religious groups, a church cannot request legal status until it has been in existence for 20 years. This mean it must function "illegally" for some time.

New congregations can request permission to operate locally. Some government officials considered Quang uncooperative, so local officials never gave the church official permission to function in Ben Cat.

International people acquainted with the Mennonite churches in Vietnam are considering an appropriate response to express solidarity.—*Luke Yoder for* Mennonite World Review

MCC reaches out to Iraqis displaced by armed conflict

People urged to call on U.S. lawmakers to oppose military intervention

As armed conflict forces Iraqis from their homes, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is providing vital items for daily life and is planning with partner organizations for an ongoing response.

MCC also is calling on U.S. lawmakers to oppose military intervention in Iraq and instead to send humanitarian aid for the U.N.-estimated 1.9 million internally displaced people (IDPs) in the country.

After the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) took over the city of Mosul on June 11, more than 300,000 residents fled into nearby villages and the Kurdish area of Iraq, where MCC workers Deborah and James Fine live and work. The Fines are from Bristol, Pa.

One MCC partner, Al Amal (The Hope), which has ongoing peacebuilding and community improvement projects near Mosul, already is providing food and water to IDPs, supported by MCC funds. Water and electricity are cut off in many of the villages, making coping difficult for both the IDPs and the host families that have welcomed them.

The Fines, the only MCC workers in Iraq, are in Erbil, about 60 miles east of Mosul. Their work continues, which now includes planning MCC's emergency response with partner organizations in Nineveh Province, where Mosul is located, and the short-term Summer Intensive English program, which brings teachers to a program of Chaldean Archdiocese of Erbil, a Christian partner.

People can help Iraqis through MCC by meeting critical needs for relief kits and hygiene kits, financially supporting the response and MCC's ongoing work in Iraq and sending letters to lawmakers calling for peaceful response in Iraq.

Relief and hygiene kits help people who have fled their homes because of war and disaster keep clean and healthy. More information is available at mcc.org/get-involved/kits or by contacting an MCC office. MCC hopes to send 12,000 hygiene kits and 3,000 relief kits, the equivalent of two shipping containers, to uprooted Iraqis and others in the region affected by ongoing conflict and displacement. MCC sent more than 57,000 of these kits last year, including to people in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan displaced by the Syrian war.

Gifts of money support MCC's efforts with partners in Iraq to respond quickly to meet basic needs and to continue to invest in long-term solutions that build peace. People may give online at donate.mcc.org/iraq, by calling 888-563-4676, or by sending donations to MCC U.S., 21 S. 12th St., Akron, PA 17501, specifying "Iraq response."

The MCC U.S. Washington Office Action Alert, mcc.org/advocate-iraq, provides a simple method for people to contact their representatives and the president.

Gordon Epp-Fransen, an MCC program leader in the region, notes that while the U.S. military appears to be renewing engagement in Iraq, MCC already is there and actively meeting the needs of people displaced by conflict both in Iraq and in nearby countries.

"The same day that President Obama announced the introduction of 300 military personnel into Iraq, five teachers from the United States and Canada flew into Iraq to serve with MCC's short-term Intensive English Program, one of the ways we support Iraqi Christians, many of whom have been displaced or traumatized by earlier conflicts," says Epp-Fransen. "We will continue to work with long-term partners to determine how MCC can be of immediate assistance to the thousands of recently displaced persons."

Carolyne and Gordon Epp-Fransen are MCC representatives for Iraq, Iran and Jordan and live in Amman, Jordan. They are from Winnipeg, Manitoba.—*MCC staff*

Photo courtesy of Yazidi Solidarity Association

On June 12, Mohamed Abu Jasem, left, Hussam Abdullah and other volunteers with MCC Iraq partner Al Amal loaded a truck in Bashiqa with food and water to be distributed there and in other villages in Nineveh Province.

Peacebuilding in a divided pacifist church

One family's story reflects the stories of many Mennonite families.

Is Mennonite Church USA headed for a split? And if it is, is this a tragedy or an opportunity? Will it bring harm or growth?

While Anabaptists have a long history of pacifism directed toward state violence, we have had a more difficult time applying Jesus' teachings of loving our enemies or of those we disagree with in our communal life. The pacifist church suffers from harsh internal conflict.

A short history of religious splitting

People of faith have a long tradition of splitting over theological ideas. Abraham's descendants broke into three separate religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). Liberal and conservative members of each of these three religions now spend a majority of their time disagreeing and even fighting among themselves.

Anabaptists are no different. Anabaptists split off from both Catholics and Protestants because they wanted to follow the teachings of Jesus more closely. And Anabaptists continued to split over their interpretation of Scripture. Like other persecuted sects, Anabaptists became uniquely intolerant of minor differences among themselves. Adopting the same punitive approach as the oppressive state and church, Anabaptists practiced severe social practices such as shunning and made repeated decisions to break away from or push out those with whom they disagreed.

While early Anabaptists professed pacifism and love of enemies, the Anabaptist story is full of harsh splits over every disagreement imaginable.

While early Anabaptists professed pacifism and love of enemies, the Anabaptist story is full of harsh splits over every disagreement imaginable. Anabaptists split over how severely to punish sinners through shunning. They argued whether it was okay to use buttons, first developed for the military, instead of hook and eye fasteners. In the last century, Mennonites who thought Sunday school was sinful parted ways with those supporting church education. Mennonites argued over clothing and hairstyles, whether to allow African Americans to attend Mennonite institutions, and whether to allow divorced people and women in ministry. Understanding our church history of conflict—as well as peacemaking—is important in the midst of current Mennonite deliberations.

One family's story of Anabaptist splits

Like most Anabaptist families, our family has been impacted by Anabaptist conflicts. Our ancestor Jacob Guth, a leader of Anabaptists in France and Germany, believed the practice of shunning should only apply to taking Communion. Guth disagreed with Jacob Amman (whose followers became Amish), who believed that shunning required breaking all social relations with those who sin and who supported th position of Han Reist (whose followers became Mennonites). Many letters between the followers of Reist and Amman showed harsh language. They ultimately excommunicated each other.

In 1711, the Dutch Mennonite churches sent four boats t Berne, Switzerland, to aid in the evacuation of persecuted Anabaptists. The feeling of bitterness between the Reist an Amman followers was so intense that they refused to share the same boat to escape persecution. Another ancestor, Ulrich Schürch, and his family were on the boat of Reist followers, while our ancestor Samuel Raber was on another ship o Amman supporters.

The Anabaptist history of splitting continued after immigrating to the United States. In 1847, our ancestor Henry B Shelly helped organize a meeting with John Oberholzer over issues of disagreement with other congregations in the Franconia Conference. Conservative Mennonites criticized Oberholzer for not wearing the proper coat, writing a constitution and his educational programs for youth. They argued these were not biblical. The 1847 meeting of Shelly and Oberholzer was a precursor to an 1860 meeting in Iowa that led to the formation of the General Conference Mennonite Church, which did allow Sunday school educational programs.

In 1864, ancestor Helena Stahly joined the home congregation of Amish bishop Joseph Stucky in central Illinois. Stucky was excommunicated from another Amish congregation in 1872 because of disagreements over dress, hairstyles and the refusal to excommunicate an elderly member of his church over a poem that suggested that hell did not exist.

Our family history is not unique. Many Mennonite and Amish families could recite a similar historical connection to the many Anabaptist conflicts and divisions.

What can we learn from Anabaptist history?

What can we learn from the legacy of generations of Anabaptist splitting that is relevant to Mennonites' struggle to deal with conflict today? Arguments over selective biblical passages seem to result in church splits. Issues that seemed critical to church unity at the time do not appear divisive after several generations. Church historians should analyze church splits in the past and what we can learn from them.

We might start with the "Letters of the Amish Division." Perhaps these harsh exchanges between followers of Hans Reist and Jacob Amman should be required reading for all Mennonite congregations considering a church split today to temper our modern tongues, which can be equally unkind. Bishop Joseph Stucky asked his fellow bishops in 1869 to read these letters so that they would not make the same mistakes.

There have been some peacemakers among us attempting to mediate Anabaptist conflicts.

Our Guth ancestors attempted to mediate between leaders of the two groups of Anabaptists. But Jacob Amman said that if even one hair on his head was for reconciliation with Reist and his followers, Amman would "pluck it out."

Later, Jacob Amman's younger brother Ulrich Amman wrote a letter denouncing the harsh language each side used. He suggested that the two groups recognize each other's position and agree to allow each group to practice their own interpretation of shunning. He proposed that the two groups remain as one body, a position earlier advocated by our ancestor Jacob Guth. However, Guth apparently was still bitter from the harsh exchanges in the earlier split and told his congregations to just "let it go." Anabaptists have missed many chances for reconciliation and changing the course of history.

What would have been different if Anabaptists had practiced a pragmatic pacifism with each other in the past by being more respectful of each other in the midst of their differences? What if Anabaptists had put more emphasis on grace, mercy, compassion, love and unity in Christ than in practicing judgment, striving for theological purity and harshly punishing those perceived to be sinners?

What more could Anabaptists accomplish if we focus on our common ground rather than our differences?

Peacebuilding in a divided, pacifist church

The chasm between Anabaptist pacifist theology and social skills in handling conflict continues to haunt Mennonite institutions. Many Mennonites seem to believe that if we disagree we will have to part ways. So Mennonites rely on conflict avoidance and passive-aggressive ways of interacting. U.S. Mennonites also live in an uncivil political atmosphere that teaches us not to trust or even listen to those with whom we disagree.

Today, Anabaptists are again contemplating a split over scriptural interpretations of sexuality and issues related to how we structure our church decision-making. On the one hand, a split would affirm a historic Anabaptist pattern of failing to find a way through disagreement. It would signify that we are stuck in the illusory thinking that if we can purge the church of those we disagree with, then we can all get back to the business of following Jesus.

On the other hand, a church that is made up of biblical fundamentalists and biblical modernists (which is one way of describing Mennonite Church USA) may well be destined for endless strife. Respectfully parting ways rather than enduring continuous strife could be healthier for everyone. The Bible gives several examples of people who reconcile with each other only to then part ways more gently. The story of Jacob and Esau ends with the brothers walking in different directions.

It is important that we practice our pacifism in the midst of church conflicts. Mennonite commitments to pragmatic peacemaking led to Mennonite Church USA's publication of biblical guidelines for "Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love." These are the same principles that now inform Mennonite peacebuilding initiatives in Afghanistan, Syria, Colombia and elsewhere. These principles include the following:

- Accept conflict as normal.
- Go directly to those you disagree with and, in the spirit of humility, listen to other points of view.
- Be slow to judge.
- Be willing to find common ground and brainstorm potential options for maintaining relationships.
- Be respectful and loving.

U.S. Mennonites live in an uncivil political atmosphere that teaches us not to trust or even listen to those with whom we disagree.

Mennonites from different conferences should continue to find ways to cooperate and share institutions where we have common interests—such as Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Economic Development Associates and Mennonite Disaster Service—where we work compassionately together to serve those in need. Mennonite World Conference and shared publications allow different denominations to meet together, listen to and learn from each other.

Continued Anabaptist efforts to create a "pure church" that includes only those with exactly the same theological and scriptural position is unlikely to result in a church that resembles the life of Jesus. Interacting respectfully, listening and learning from those with different scriptural interpretations and theologies offers us an opportunity to model to the world what Jesus taught us about loving enemies. It is time for practicing pacifism within the church, not just out in the world.—*Verne Schirch is a retired professor of biochemistry and molecular biology at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Va. With his wife, Carol Shelly, they are writing their family history. His daughter Lisa Schirch is research professor at Eastern Mennonite University's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding in Harrisonburg, Va.*

MWC commissions meet face to face in the Netherlands

Peace, Mission, Deacons and Faith and Life commissions plan work.

Leaders and members of the four Mennonite World Conference commissions met March 19-24 in Schoorl, Netherlands, for a time of face-to-face discussion, reflection, worship and strategic planning to advance the mission of MWC.

It was only the second such meeting of the four commissions since their formation in 2009. They last met face-to-face in Switzerland in 2012, prior to the MWC General Council meeting.

Approximately 50 women and men from around the globe gathered at the Mennonite Conference Centre Doperaduin, one of three retreat centers run by the Algemene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit (Dutch Mennonite Church).

Resources for dealing with conflict

The Peace Commission meetings focused on building their web-based "Manual of Resources for Dealing with Conflict," an umbrella set of resources under which the commission plans to place a variety of tools, documents and other materials related to conflict transformation, reconciliation and trauma healing. One resource is "Guidelines for Determining MWC Response to Internal Conflicts of Member Churches." It is available on the Peace Commission page on the MWC website (www.mwc-cmm.org) and has been translated into English, Spanish and French.

During its March meetings, the commission worked on a second resource, "Reconciling Our Perspectives, Restoring Our Relationships: Dialogue and Understanding Within Mennonite World Conference." This provides guidelines for dealing with interpersonal and intergroup conflict within the MWC community. A draft version of this document is currently being refined and reviewed.

All resources being developed by the commission fall into one of three categories: preconflict, conflict, and postconflict. Conflict materials are intended for use by congregations, conferences or other groups in the midst of disputes or disagreements. Postconflict materials are focused on healing after conflict and dealing with "legacy conflicts," such as past conflicts that were never fully resolved. Preconflict materials provide capacity-building resources used to identify and plan for resolution of future discord.

A theology of mission

The Mission Commission focused on drafting an Anabaptist theology of mission. The draft will be presented to the Global Anabaptist Service Network and Global Mission Fellowship, which function under the Mission Commission, for review. The document will then be presented to the MWC General Council for approval and adoption.

The Mission Commission also spent time further outlining its plan for a Global Association of Anabaptist Missiologists. This body will have a threefold purpose: (1) to provide intercultural fellowship among Anabaptist missiologists worldwide, (2) to practice corporate, disciplined reflection o missions from an Anabaptist perspective and (3) to create Anabaptist vision and perspectives on mission that are truly global in scope and content.

Koinonia delegations, Global Anabaptist deacons

The Deacons Commission reaffirmed two key initiatives—the regular rotation of Koinonia delegations and the Global Anabaptist Deacons program—and spent time planning each.

In affirming a regular rotation of Koinonia delegations to Latin America, Africa and Asia (respectively), the commission returns to a plan established in previous meetings. Implementation was delayed, however, by logistical problems and more pressing visits.

Finally, the commission strategized for a potential relaunch of the Global Anabaptist Deacons program. Its plan is to recruit GADs from each continental region where MWC has member churches. GADs serve as the "eyes and ears" of the Deacons Commission in their respective regions. GADs will also inform their churches about global church prayer requests.

Learning from ecumenical dialogues

The Faith and Life Commission continued to work on projects, including the Global Anabaptist Profile, the Bearin Witness Stories Project and ecumenical dialogues with Catholics, Lutherans and Seventh-Day Adventists.

The commission discussed ways to bring the results of ecumenical conversations to bear within Anabaptist-Mennonite congregations and educational institutions. Earlier this year, the commission circulated a letter (available at www.mwc-cmm.org) encouraging Anabaptist-Mennonite educators to adopt a new paradigm for teaching Lutheran-Anabaptist history, one that reflects the recent reconciliation between the two traditions.

The commission also identified future dialogue partners, including Pentecostals.

It also planned for a Global Educators Conference, scheduled for the 2015 assembly in Harrisburg, Pa. This gathering is being jointly sponsored by the International Community o Mennonite Brethren (ICOMB) and Mennonite Education Agency of Mennonite Church USA.

Joint meetings bring spiritual enrichment

Joint sessions were held in the mornings and evenings. Morning meetings included a devotional time led by a commission member. Evening sessions involved prayer led by a commission officer.—*Devin Manzullo-Thomas, with additional reporting by Janneke Leerink*

Goshen nursing students on call in Nepal

11 students in first Goshen College international nursing course

Goshen (Ind.) College nursing students, with the help of a GC nursing alum, experienced the realities of nursing abroad and found new "sisters" during a May term class in Nepal.

Beth Beels, a 1975 GC graduate who has served as a teacher, nurse and service worker in Nepal multiple times since 1977, met the 11 nursing students for the first time in the Kathmandu airport on May 29. She had high hopes that they would embrace the culture openly and learn from their surroundings.

Two years ago, Beels approached the Goshen College Nursing Department about the possibility of bringing a GC nursing class to Nepal.

The nursing department approved the proposal, and the Nursing in Nepal class became the first Goshen College international nursing course and fulfilled Beels' lifelong dream of bringing GC nursing students to learn and live among Nepali students.

Beels grouped Goshen College and Nepali students in pairs, calling them sisters and hoping it would initiate a bond that spanned cultural, religious, educational and age-based differences.

"Many people from the United States come to Nepal and then just leave," says Beels. "So I thought, I'm going to prepare Nepali and Goshen students to act like sisters. I wanted to emphasize relationships."

The students served in the Tansen Mission Hospital, which is considered one of the best nursing schools in Nepal and is located in the central hills of the country. Shakuntala Thanju, one of Beels' Nepali nursing students from the 1970s, directs Tansen Mission Hospital. Thanju is also the mother of GC nursing student Ashika Thanju, who participated in the Nursing in Nepal class.

Within the first few days, the GC women showed Beels their willingness to welcome new experiences and embrace relationships with Nepali students and faculty.

"GC students more than met my expectations," says Beels. "I was surprised that no students complained about the heat, the food or the conditions."

The students worked as pairs throughout most of their time at Tansen. Sometimes the units functioned smoothly. Other times, like sisters, their viewpoints clashed, and they had to work through disagreements to reach a solution.

Learning difficult lessons

The trip was not without heartbreak. More than 10 patients died in Tansen Mission Hospital within the two-week period that GC students served and learned there.

"For some, it was a hard reality to accept that we really couldn't change things," says Gail Weybright, a 1995 GC graduate and associate professor of nursing, who co-taught the class. "There was some significant heartache for some, something I didn't anticipate."

"There were tears," says Beels. "I told them that when you save a baby from a burning building, you might get a few burns yourself. When you're helping people who are hurt, you may feel hurt yourself."

The difficult times were diffused by many enriching moments. At the end of their stay, the GC students showed their appreciation through a song-and-dance performance and invited the Nepali students on stage.

"I learned the importance of humble service," says Irene Schmid, a junior from Dalton, Ohio. "It would have been easy to go to Nepal and make it seem like we were serving the Nepalis, but in reality they were serving us just as much, if not more."

Beels says she feels grateful that she was able to realize her own goal and inspire the students. "This was a learning experience for both groups of students," she says.

Beels hopes the Nursing in Nepal course will continue to create positive relationships between U.S. and Nepali students in the future. She also encourages more nursing educators to teach in Nepal, as it has a lack of instructors.

For Beels, Weybright and the students, the trip was both successful and life changing.

"I was sometimes moved to tears by the level of the students' sensitivity, passion, professionalism, compassion and desire to make a difference," says Weybright.—*Liz Core for Goshen College*

Goshen College

Goshen College nursing students Olivia Ressler and Ashika Thanju work with their Nepali "sisters" during a class at the Tansen Nursing School in Nepal. Thanju's mother serves as director of Tansen Nursing School.

CALENDAR

"Know Jesus" event, Goshen College campus, Goshen, Ind., Aug. 1-3. Sponsored jointly by Amigo Centre and Camp Friendenswald. Contact either camp for more information.

Hesston College Homecoming Weekend, Sept. 25-28, in Hesston, Kan.

Bethel College Fall Festival, North Newton, Kan., Oct. 18.

OBITUARIES

Alwine, Clarence, 99, Belleville, Pa., died June 21. Spouse: Turie Kauffman Renno Alwine (deceased). Spouse: Erma Shetler Alwine (deceased). Parents: Romanus and Cassie Berkey Alwine. Children: Rhoda Dabbs, Martha Lehman, Melvin, Norma Alwine; 12 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Memorial service: June 24 at Kauffman Mennonite Church, Davidsville, Pa.

Amstutz, Julia Ruth "Judy" Ebersole, 80, La Junta, Colo., died April 5. Spouse: Mahlon Amstutz. Parents: Clarence and Ruth Ebersole. Children: Lynn, Lori, Rod, Rita. Funeral: April 15 in Denver, Colo.

Battice, Brenda Nicole Neuenschwander, 30, Goshen, Ind., died May 11. Parents: Keith and Cindy Knose Neuenschwander. Child: Kiante Battice. Funeral: May 16 at Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Bender, Ora Magdalene Kremer, 92, Harrisonburg, Va., died Jan. 20. Spouse: Daniel H. Bender. Parents: William and Malinda Miller Kremer. Children: Debra Hope Bender Stewart, Judy Lorayne Yoder, Evan D.H. Bender, Eric Kremer Bender; six grandchildren. Funeral: Jan. 24 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Bock, Mary Emma "Emmie" Blough, 81, Harrisonburg, Va., died June 22. Spouse: Warren Bock. Parents: Harry and Freda Berkey Blough. Children: Susan Earley, Alan. Memorial service: July 12 at Parkview Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Braun, Ed, 88, Altona, Manitoba, died June 3. Spouse: Linda Hildebrand Braun. Parents: Abram J. and Gertrude Braun. Children: Barry, Rhonda Driedger, Gail Braun, Laurie Dueck; nine grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 6 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

Dietzel, Arnold, 99, Hesston, Kan., died July 4. Spouse: Wilmetta Weaver Dietzel. Parents: Samuel and Elma Dietzel. Children: Ronald, Margaret Hillegass, Carol Cranston; seven grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 8 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Drescher, John M., 85, Quakertown, Pa., died July 10. Spouse: Betty Keener Drescher. Children: Ron, Sandy Drescher-Lehman, Rose Longacre, Joe, David; 14 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Memorial service: July 26 at Franconia (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

Dyck, Esther Teichroeb, 74, Altona, Manitoba, died June 7. Spouse: Bill R. Dyck (deceased). Parents: Abram A. and Tina Olfert Teichroeb. Children: Bill, Tim, Irvin; six grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 12 at Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Altona.

Eby, Loren J., 82, Elkhart, Ind., died June 8. Spouse: Phyllis M. Brown Eby. Parents: Walter and Ellen Drake Eby. Children: Gary Eby, Loretta Eby-Jackson, Lorene Mann, May Ellen Eby-Roberts, Jack Brown, Scott Brown, Dennis Brown, Teri Brown-Kaufman; 11 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 14 at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart.

Gerber, Titus, 97, Sugarcreek, Ohio, die June 9. Spouse: Melvena "Melie" Gerber (deceased). Parents: Herbert and Amanda Gerber. Children: Joan Miller, Marilyn Nuss baum, Dewey; 10 grandchildren and grea grandchildren. Memorial service: June 13 at Walnut Creek Mennonite Church, Walnut Creek, Ohio.

Gerig, Eldon Lavern, 86, South Bend, Ind., died June 24 of Parkinson's Disease. Spouse: Luella Joan Albrecht Gerig. Spouse: Merin C. and Emma Nofziger Gerig. Children: Winston, Kevin, Nita Geri Johnson; 11 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 29 at Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend.

Gingerich, Marjorie J. Rhodes, 86, Wellman, Iowa, died June 3. Spouse: Clarence Gingerich (deceased). Parents: Frank and Lavanda Preston Rhodes. Child Ed; three grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 7 at East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa.

Grove, Geneva Elizabeth Rowe, 95, Lyndhurst, Va., died April 10. Spouse: Tim thy Grove (deceased). Parents: James O. and Lillian Conner Rowe. Children: Carol Wheeler, Sharon Sweet, Gene, Cecil, Kenneth, Billy, Timothy; 15 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: April 14 at Springdale Mennonite Church, Waynesboro, Va.

Hertzler, Valerie Joy Brunk, 45, Harrisonburg, Va., died June 14. Spouse: Andr Hertzler. Parents: George R. Brunk III and Erma Hess Brunk. Children: Casey, Noah. Funeral: June 19 at Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville, Va.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Hershberger, Amy Ruth Janzen, 87, Hesston, Kan., died June 13. Spouse: Weldon Hershberger (deceased). Parents: John M. and Margaret Schroeder Janzen. Children: Kathy Nightengale, Don, Roger, Ron, Sharon Taubert; 23 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 23 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Hostetler, June L. Van Zuilen, 84, Middlebury, Ind., died June 12, from complications from surgery. Spouse: Frank Hostetler. Parents: Henry and Emily Brauneis Van Zuilen. Children: Jeanne Hostetler, Jennifer Mottier, Monte; four grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: June 17 at Shore Mennonite Church, Shipshewana, Ind.

Hostetter, Elizabeth Louise, 87, Harrisonburg, Va., died April 27. Parents: D. Ralph and Kathryn K. Hostetter. Funeral: May 7 at Strite Auditorium at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, Harrisonburg.

Kauffman, David "Doc" V., 92, Whitefish, Mont., died April 14. Spouse: Ruth Eberly Kauffman. Parents: N. L. "Roy" and Anna Snyder Kauffman. Children: David, Stephen, Elizabeth "Betsy" Harmon, Rebecca "Becky" Kauffman-Piotrowski, 6 grandchildren. Memorial service: April 25 at Whitefish Lutheran Church.

Lehman, Reuel S., 92, Goshen, Ind., died June 19. Spouse: Agnes M. Hershberger Lehman (deceased). Parents: Joseph and Stella Sharp Lehman. Children: Bruce, Jeanne Rothchild, Judy VenderMaas, Barbara Lehman; four grandchildren; two step-grandchildren; three great-grandsons. Funeral: June 24 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Martin, Ruth E. Nussbaum, 87, Goshen, Ind., died June 17. Spouse: Allen S. Martin. Parents: Menno J. and Kate Miller Nussbaum. Children: Anita Martin Vernon, Rebecca Martin Picht, Rachel Stutzman, Linda Martin Burkholder, David A., Jerold; 14 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 28 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Maust, Wilbur "Bill" Richard, 80, Waterloo, Ontario, died July 2, of cancer. Spouse: Miriam Pellman Maust. Parents: Richard and Elizabeth Gunden Maust. Children: Chris, Janice Maust Hedrick; four grandchildren. Memorial service: Aug. 9 at Waterloo North Mennonite Church.

Moyer, Mary M., 93, Souderton, Pa., died June 13. Parents: Wilson and Ida Moyer Moyer. Funeral: June 17 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

Nachtigall, Grace Kauffman, 100, Iowa City, Iowa, died June 12. Spouse: Wilbur G. Nachtigall (deceased). Parents: Noah D. and Katie Egli Kauffman. Children: John, Ramon, Rosa Brunsma, Nita Michels; seven grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 12 at First Mennonite Church, Iowa City.

Peachey, Eva Jane, 90, Belleville, Pa., died June 22. Spouse: Richard Peachey (deceased). Children: Kathy Devore, Becky Peachey; four grandchildren. Funeral at Henderson Funeral Home, Belleville.

Preheim, Dorothy Louise Jensen, 93, Freeman, S.D., died May 28. Spouse: Mylo Preheim (deceased). Parents: Irvin and Erma J. Allison Jensen. Children: Greg, Cheryl Koch, Patricia Batcheller, Lee; six grandchildren. Funeral: June 9 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Riffel, Franklin Duane, 80, Reedley, Calif., died March 17, of respiratory failure. Parents: Annie Geisbrecht Riffel. Funeral: March 21 at First Mennonite Church, Reedley.

Sawatsky, Ronald G., 64, Warrington, Pa., died June 28 of a heart attack complicated by Lyme disease. Spouse: Susan "Sue" Thiessen Sawatsky. Parents: Ben W. and Susie Sawatsky. Children: Bevan, Laresa; one grandchild. Funeral: July 12 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Bucks, Pa.

Schmucker, Bernard L., 70, Maximo, Ohio, died June 19. Spouse: Patricia Murphy Schmucker. Parents: Merlin and Barbara Katich Schmucker. Children: Joel, Lisa Schmucker, Kara Tharp; seven grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 23 at Beech Mennonite Church, Louisville, Ohio.

Schrock, Daniel D., 88, Shipshewana, Ind., died July 5. Spouse: Alice Shetler Schrock. Parents: Jonas J. and Sylvia Miller Schrock. Children: Donald Duane, Dale A., one grandchild. Funeral: July 12 at Shore Mennonite Church, Shipshewana.

Sommers, Vivian E. Watson, 89, Canton, Ohio, died June 23. Spouse: Dean Sommers. Parents: William and Isabelle Stark Watson. Children: Barbara Amburgey, Margaret Miller, Christine Lab, Joyce Devaul, Dennis Williams, John Williams, Rick Schlegel; 22 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren; eight great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 26 at Stier Israel Funeral Home, Louisville, Ohio.

Steider, Donald Lee, 69, Goshen, Ind., died June 27. Spouse: Dorcas A. Miller Summerton Steider. Parents: Ray and Ruth Oswald Steider. Children: Janell Harris, Bryan Steider, Brendan Steider, Dawn Summerton, Deidre Bias; eight grandchildren. Funeral: July 2 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Stuckey, Leatha Hershberger, 91, Hicksville, Ohio, died June 21. Spouse: Howard Stuckey (deceased). Parents: Daniel and Elizabeth Sommers Hershberger. Children: Dennis, Stan, Keith, Randy, Deborah Kurtz; 18 grandchildren; 23 great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 25 at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo, Ind.

Wile, Marian R. Clemens, 83, Harleysville, Pa., died June 27. Spouse: Jacob L. Wile (deceased). Parents: Samuel L. and Ada Z. Rittenhouse Clemens. Children: Linda K. Gacy, Kenneth L.; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 2 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.30 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite,* call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email advertising@themennonite.org.

Eastern Mennonite University is seeking applicants for a **multicultural and student athlete advisor** in the Department of Multicultural and International Student Services and Athletics. Primary responsibility includes programming and developing relationships with students that contribute to their academic success and are affirming and supportive of the diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds represented within the university and global Mennonite church. Services for multicultural students and identified athletes include: needs assessment, programming for personal development and the exercise of leadership, supplemental orientation, advocacy, mentoring for academic achievement and success, advising of groups and individual students, and programming that promotes and deepens all students' understanding of their own and others' cultures and heritages. Bachelor's degree required. Advisor must be analytical, communicate effectively, both orally and in writing. Knowledge of Microsoft Office and ability to speak a second language and/or experience living in another culture desirable. Position is ¾-time with benefits. Submit application, resumé and contract information for three references to: hr@emu.edu. For more information visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanresources. People who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Explore God's love with the new Shine Sunday school curriculum! Shine: Living in God's Light has engaging stories and activities that will teach children the Bible, understand that they are known and loved by God, and learn what it means to follow Jesus. Find sample sessions, Bible outlines and more at www.shinecurriculum.com.

Assembly Mennonite 40th Anniversary Coffee House: Assembly Mennonite has turned 40! Please join us in celebrating our history since 1974 with music, storytelling and a book launch. Sept. 27, 7 p.m., 1201 S. 11th, Goshen, Ind. (AMC Meetinghouse). To find out more go to: assemblymennonite.org or Assembly Mennonite Church 40th Anniversary on Facebook.

Are you the one God has been preparing for us? **Fairview Mennonite Church** is seeking a **full-time lead pastor**. Located in rural northern Michigan, with weekly attendance around 100, the heart of FMC's vision is to build relationships in the community that meet people's needs. If you are interested in exploring possibilities at Fairview Mennonite Church, please email the search committee at fmcpastorsearch@gmail.com or call Don Haskin at 989-335-3153.

Bethany Christian Schools, Goshen, Ind., is seeking a **head of school** to lead a private Christian school that provides Christian education to about 280 students in grades 4-12. Bethany Christian Schools is a dynamic learning community that integrat faith development with academic excellence. Grounded in Mennonite values, Bethany equips students for Christian discipleship in the church and around the world. Qualified candidates must have prior experience in school administration and organization leadership, preferably in a senior administrative position, with church school experience. A master's degree in education from a accredited college or university is required. The candidate must have or be able to obtain an Indiana Building Level Administrato License prior to starting this job. Qualified candidates must possess proven skills in leading educational institutions while exhib ing a passion for entrepreneurial pedagogy and administration. The candidate must have a mature, growing commitment to Jesu Christ. The candidate must be a contributing participant in the mission of their congregation and must have a commitment to Anabaptist-Mennonite belief and practice. Cover letter and resumé may be sent to: Kirk Stiffney, 1114 N. Main St., Goshen, IN 46528; 574-537-8736; Kirk@stiffneygroup.com.

Hinkletown Mennonite School, Ephrata, Pa., is seeking a **part-time director of advancement** to lead the school's fund-raising strategy and connection with donors in the community. Applicants must be committed to Christian education. At least three years' experience working in a nonprofit preferred. Hinkletown Mennonite School is a private school in northern Lar caster County, Pa., providing faith-based education from an Anabaptist perspective to about 190 students in pre-K through grade eight. Send cover letter, resumé and application to Dawn Landes, Administrator, at dlandes@hmsk8.org.

Landisville Mennonite Church, Landisville, Pa., is seeking a **full-time associate pastor of youth and young adults**. For more information, please contact the search committee at search@landisvillemennonite.org.

Eastern Mennonite University is seeking applicants for a **full-time web designer and analyst** in the marketing and communications department. Responsibilities include overseein the delivery of EMU electronic messages through the university website and analyzing results for constant improvement. This po sition attends to web optimization and usability concerns and is key connector to EMU's Information Systems department. The web designer continually seeks ways to make the EMU website friendlier and more useful. Experience with responsive web design, information architecture, graphic design, common web applications, usability, accessibility, and social media and new media. Bachelor's degree required. Submit application, resumé and three references to: hr@emu.edu. For more information visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanresources. People who brin diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

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Franconia Mennonite Church is seeking a **full-time youth pastor** to work with the senior high youth of our congregation (grades 9-12) as well as our junior high youth (grades 6-8). We are looking for someone with energy and enthusiasm who exhibits strong Christian character that demonstrates a close relationship with Christ. Responsibilities include teaching Sunday school and Bible studies, leading and organizing service trips and working with a team of sponsors to plan and organize events to challenge youth to commit their lives to Christ. Send resumé to Franconia Mennonite Church, Attn: Monique Kratz, 613 Harleysville Pike Telford, PA 18969 or mkratz@franconiamennonite.org.

Mellinger Mennonite Church seeks a **full-time associate pastor** with a focus on youth and young adult ministry. We are a thriving congregation of 350 regular worshipers. The associate pastor would join a pastoral team of 10 in Lancaster, Pa. We are a congregation with 40 children, 28 youth and 25 young adults. Mellinger members are involved in our community, Lancaster Mennonite Conference, Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite World Conference. We seek an associate pastor to provide spiritual leadership for our youth and young adult ministries (60 percent) and also to serve as an associate pastor within the congregation (40 percent). General pastoral duties include preaching, pastoral care and being available to assist in weddings, funerals and worship (40 percent). The ideal candidate for this position will have a deep commitment to Jesus, a commitment to an Anabaptist perspective and a desire to be a part of a growing and dynamic congregation. For information, please contact Search Committee Chair Joe Miller (joe@mellingerchurch.org) or Mellinger District overseer and Search Committee member Jason Kuniholm (jkuniholm@gmail.com).

Mennonite Women USA seeks a strong, visionary leader and fund-raiser to direct the overall mission and vision of empowering women and women's groups within the Mennonite church. The **executive director** supervises dispersed staff and coordinates and develops the various ministries, programs, publications and promotional material. This full-time position requires working independently but also as part of a team, excellent verbal and written skills, including public speaking, and ability to build relationships with people of diverse backgrounds. Involves travel. Go to http://mennonitewomenusa.org/ for a full job description.

Menno Haven Camp & Retreat Center, Tiskilwa, Ill., seeks a **full-time facilities director** to be responsible for maintaining and improving all facilities, grounds, systems and equipment for our 230-acre/220-bed year-round ministry. General skills in the areas of carpentry, electrical, plumbing, mechanics and groundskeeping are needed. Candidate must have a heart for service and a deep commitment to the organization's mission; possess strong organizational, planning, interpersonal and leadership skills. Available fall 2014. Salary, housing and benefits. Submit letter of interest and resume to Doc Johnson, execdir@mennohaven.com.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read **Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

Conrad Grebel
University College

Faculty Position in Peace and Conflict Studies

Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo invites applications for a full-time regular faculty position in the undergraduate and graduate Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) program with teaching and research expertise in interdisciplinary and multi-sector approaches to peace studies. The appointment will begin **July 1, 2015**. The College will begin reviewing applications on **October 1, 2014.** The College is committed to employment equity. Canadian citizens and permanent residents will be given priority. For further information about the position, qualifications and application procedures, see: **grebel.ca/positions**

140 Westmount Road North, Waterloo, ON N2L 3G6

Why I stay in church

Sherah-Leigh Gerber is director of advancement for Virginia Mennonite Missions. She lives with her husband and two young children in Harrisonburg, Va.

The baby trips over his own feet, bumping his head on the pew ahead of us. As I scoop him off the floor, patting and shushing him, I catch my husband's eye. Your turn or mine? my eyebrows ask as we do the dance of parenting two little ones at church. I get to stay, and as the sermon begins, our preschooler is plastering her notebook with yellow smiley-face stickers. I try to focus on what's being said, but what runs through my mind is all that I noticed that morning.

My neighbor was enjoying a leisurely cup of coffee on the back deck, while I gulped mine over the kitchen sink before scooping up a child and heading to the car. A trim and athletic couple ran up the hill in our development with their chubby twins tucked happily in the double jogging stroller while I listened to "Toad Looks Funny in a Bathing Suit" for the tenth time this week. A family with smiling faces munched on blueberry pancakes at the local diner as we waited for the stoplight to change.

God's work has always unfolded in the crowd of community.

And I wondered, Why do I keep coming? Why do I even go to church?

It's not just logistical issues that raise this question. In the current denominational climate, when it seems a lot of energy is being expended around an issue that pulls us apart rather than shows us to be like Christ, I wonder (and am often asked by peers who are fleeing), Why do I keep investing? Why do I stay?

I am weary of talking, listening and discerning. It's hard to believe it is an authentic conversation with the hope of true discernment when it seems those identified as stakeholders have varying levels of commitment and investment. I am tired of being asked to participate, to wait and decide when the conversation seems to be guided toward predetermined outcomes.

Often, it feels like leaving the church would be an easier path. I don't believe the primary call of my faith is to a life of ease. It seems one of the marks of faith is costly discipleship. Staying at the table, using our voices and sharing our gifts all require vulnerability, openness and risk.

As the ode of the oboe washes over me, as I join my voice with those around me, proclaiming the wideness in God's mercy and beseeching the Lord for mercy, as I hear the admonition and challenge from the pulpit about sin and relationships know the answer to the why question that has been roiling around within me.

I stay with the church for the same reason I st invite people to my house for a meal, even if it's hot dogs and potato chips. The ideal of two meat alongside seven sweets and seven sours was never a reality around our table. And the lesser goal of a hot and cold vegetable is now replaced with the reminder that it's not about the food we eat but about being together. It's about the laugh ter we share over the way a toddler is making sense of the world. It's about the release that ha pens when we can share the anxiety we are carr ing around—about breaking the pacifier habit of preschooler, lending enough support to the coworker in crisis or balanc ing the demands of work ar family.

I stay because of the re lationships—the accounta bility and challenge the church community provides. It is within her she ter that I test and negotiate my insights and reve lations. Within her wings I am encouraged and supported by other believers. The church is the place where the anchor of faith holds. When I fe overcome by darkness, the community is the on that holds the Christ light for me. When I am overflowing with joy, the community celebrates with me. When I am unsure of the next step on the journey, the community reminds me of wher I have been and of God's faithfulness. Then it helps me discern, asking and listening alongside me.

I stay with the church because it is God's design for ushering in the kingdom. God's work ha always unfolded in the crowd of community. God has designed us for partnership, co-creation. Sure, it's slow work. Yes—it's messy business. I do not believe that God or the vision of the kingdom is limited by our ability to live as church.

However, I believe our ability to fully experience the kingdom and to reflect Christ is stunted by our ability to participate as believers in a wide community that continually seeks to be transformed by relationship with Jesus. The fruits of the Spirit must be evident in our own families ar congregations before we can witness to a waiting world. TM

FILM REVIEW

Fed Up (PG), a documentary on obesity, asks us to stop blaming the victim—the overweight individual—and instead blame the food industry, demonizing it the way we did the tobacco industry. The film argues that obesity rates rose at the same time food companies began manufacturing low-calorie and low-fat food options but increased sugar, which is addictive, in those foods. It challenges viewers to cook more and eat more real food. Oversimplified, it still tells one important part of the obesity epidemic story.—*Anna Groff*

BOOK REVIEWS

North America: Seeking Places of Peace by Royden Lowwen and Steven M. Nolt (Good Books and Pandora Press, 2012, $11.95) is the fifth and final volume in the Global Mennonite History Series initiated by Mennonite World Conference in 1997. This, and the series, is a treasury of historical information.—*Gordon Houser*

Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest: Merton, Berrigan, Yoder and Muste at the Gethsemani Abbey Peacemakers Retreat by Gordon Oyer (Cascade Books, 2014, $33) goes into great detail to report on an unprecedented gathering of 13 peace activists in the fall of 1964 at the Tappist monastery where Thomas Merton lived. Catholics, including the Daniel and Philip Berrigan, and Protestants, including John Howard Yoder, met over three days to discuss the spiritual roots of protest. A fascinating and enlightening account by Oyer, a Mennonite.—*gh*

Hauerwas: A (Very) Critical Introduction by Nicholas M. Healy (Eerdmans, 2014, $23) offers a critical, though friendly analysis of the work of Stanley Hauerwas, who is read and appreciated by many Mennonites. Healy writes that "Hauerwas is indeed an insightful Christian thinker and a splendid social ethicist, but theologically his work is surprisingly thin." Healy's critique is incise and helpful, though his Roman Catholic bias shows.—*gh*

Will the Internet remain free?

Thus far, those of us who use the Internet have enjoyed free access, as long as we have a phone line, cable line or Wi-Fi connection. We can communicate what we want without it having to pass the muster of the government or some corporation. But that could change.

What we have enjoyed is called "net neutrality," which is "the principle that Internet service providers (ISPs) and governments should treat all data on the Internet equally, not discriminating or charging differentially by user, content, site, platform, application, type of attached equipment and modes of communication," according to Wikipedia.

There has been much debate about whether net neutrality should be required by law. The Federal Trade Commission (FCC) has been considering a rule that would allow ISPs, such as AT&T, Comcast and Verizon, to offer content providers a faster track to send content. This would end net neutrality.

In her article "Can We Keep the Internet Free?" (*Yes! Magazine*), Candace Clement expresses alarm about this possibility. If the FCC rules in favor of the ISPs, she writes, it would give them "the freedom to favor their own offerings over those of their competitors."

She quotes from a *New York Times* editorial: "In this new world, smaller content providers and startups that could not pay for preferential treatment might not be able to compete because their delivery speeds would be much slower. And consumers would have to pay more because any company that agrees to strike deals with phone and cable companies would undoubtedly pass on those costs to their users."

This follows a pattern observable throughout history: The rich get richer, the big get bigger. The smaller and those without get poorer and smaller.

Many have seen the Internet as a democratization of communication. The previous, one-way media—broadcasting, print and cable—were supplanted by the two-way, networked communication style fostered by the World Wide Web. As Clement writes: "It's not about one company or one wire or one tower sending us information. It's about all of us communicating directly with each other."

The basic idea of net neutrality is this: When you visit a website, the phone or cable company that provides Internet access shouldn't get in the way. Information should be delivered to you quickly and without discriminating about the content. With changes, ISPs could split the flow of traffic into tiers, offering priority treatment to big corporations who would pay higher fees. That would mean a fast lane for the rich and a dirt road for others, harming small businesses and other users.

Net neutrality does not necessarily mean complete freedom. The adoption of net neutrality law usually includes allowance for discrimination in limited conditions, such as preventing spam, malware or illegal content.

Chile became the first country in the world to pass net neutrality legislation in 2010. But that law allows exceptions for ensuring privacy and security.

Once the FCC releases its official proposal, there will be much public comment. "If the initial reaction is any indicator," Clement writes, "millions of people will weigh in."

The solution, says Brian Knappenberger in the *New York Times*, is simple: "We should classify broadband access as a utility. Internet providers should be considered common carriers, just as cellphone companies are for voice access, which they are not allowed to block or degrade. The Internet should be a level playing field."

Gordon Houser is acting interim editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

reading the article and the letters of support that have flowed our way during the U.S. tax season, I simply could not continue through my day without taking the time to pause and publicly, earnestly thank each person for their contribution to CPT as an experiment in active, faith-full nonviolence.

As a young single woman of color, I also appreciate the focus on various approaches and experiences of this method of engagement with government and allegiance to Christ Jesus. *—Sarah Thompson, Chicago, executive director of CPT*

Historical irony

The withdrawal of Clinton Frame Mennonite Church from Indiana-Michigan Conference while exploring a possible connection with South Central Conference (July, page 33) presents a bittersweet irony. In the 1950s, one Mennonite district scandalized other sectors of the denomination when that conference accepted into church membership people who were divorced and remarried.

Which conference chose to reinterpret Jesus' words about divorce, remarriage and continuous adultery? Rumor said it was South Central. Leaders there believed that God wanted them to place human need ahead of inflexible devotion to the traditional interpretation of the Scriptures. What lesson might today's Christians gain from this history?*—Ray Elvin Horst, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Congratulations

I am delighted with your news (Editorial, July). It was a life-changing experience for us to become a family of three. Of necessity life needed to turn around this helpless, lovable infant, and together we fulfilled that need. The first three months seemed intense but worth all of the time and energy involved; I am sure that you will find it so. Warm blessings of daily love and renewed strength for you both.*—Wilma Shank, Goshen, Ind.*

Alcohol abuse

Thanks for "An Evangelical Case Against Alcohol" (Miscellany, July). Some of us have held that it is appropriate in Christian love for the five out of six to abstain in support of the one out of six. When I read in *The Atlantic* (July/August) that "the cost of alcohol abuse to society is by some estimates greater than the cost of all illegal drug use combined," surely there is an issue here calling for more than casual attention.*—Daniel Hertzler, Scottdale, Pa.*

LGBT Mennonite voice missing

As someone who tries my best to be an ally to LGBT Mennonites, I'm frustrated by the absence of LGBT writers in *The Mennonite*'s 2014 coverage of all the recent Mennonite Chuch USA activity that affects their lives.

I'm a doctoral student writing my dissertation on Mennonite sexual ethics. My archival research into 40 years' worth of Mennonite denominational magazines has shown me how rarely LGBT Mennonites have been allowed to speak for themselves, on their own terms, within those publications.

Are we really still stuck here, with one article after another in which straight people discuss LGBT people as "a divisive issue in the church"? Many of those pieces have been valuable and thoughtful, but the primary stakeholders in these conversations are LGBT Mennonites. There's no valid conversation to be had here without their full participation (and not just in the comment sections). Neither is there any shortage of smart, incisive, engaged and prolific LGBT Mennonites out there who could be contributing but may well be assuming, based on historical evidence, that *The Mennonite* is an inaccessible forum for them.

I encourage the editors to seek out those individuals and learn what they have to offer.*—Stephanie Krehbiel, Lawrence, Kan.*

Disappointed in EB decision

The decision of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board regarding Mountain States Mennonite Conference is very disappointing. (See article on pag 32.) What can a person/congregation/ conference do when they are asked to follow the rules of the Mennonite Church USA instead of their discerne will of God?

Is the Executive Board having thes discussions about Mennonite congrega tions who refuse to ordain women or who say they are "no longer a peace church"?*—Joyce Hostetler, Goshen, Ind.*

Supreme Court decision

In its June 30 Hobby Lobby decision, the Supreme Court quoted from the Mennonite church's statement on abor tion. The Court found that this statement supported the belief of the Mennonite Hahn family, who brought the litigation, that the use of birth control methods that destroy a fertilized egg is sinful. The Court also accepted the Hahn's belief that their company's provision of health insurance coverage that would allow their employees access to such methods of birth control would implicate them in that sin.

Unfortunately, in the same decision the Court went out of its way to refuse to honor another Mennonite belief— that it is not only wrong to kill embryo but also to kill adults. Near the end of the opinion, the Court reaffirmed an earlier decision that it is "untenable to allow individuals to seek exemptions from taxes based on religious objections to particular Government expenditures." The Court went on to say tha what it is specifically referring to is the belief that "war is sin." The Court thu refused to recognize as legitimate the belief of many Mennonites that payment of war taxes makes them complicit in sin. It failed to consider that the "less restrictive alternative" of a peace tax fund could easily accommodate this belief.

I'm glad to live in a country that pro tects the free exercise of religious belief. I only wish it would respect all, no just some, beliefs.*—Timothy Stoltzfus Jost, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Wild hope, divine hope

A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"—Mark 4:37-38 TNIV

I am writing this column on the grounds of Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The delegates of Mennonite Church Canada gathered here for discernment under the theme "Wild Hope: Faith for an Unknown Season." I joined them along with Elizabeth Soto Albrecht and several others with roles of leadership in Mennonite Church USA.

The planners for the Canadian conference believe their church must prepare itself to take Christian faith into a new cultural and civic landscape shaped by the values of post-Christendom. They anticipate a foreign season, an era that even now is taking many churches by storm, bringing to mind the fearsome plight of the disciples in a boat tossed by the sea. Expecting a time of disorientation, the Canadian leaders suggest that the future for the church must be shaped by wild hope rather than predictability, embracing God's call for a different kind of witness in the world.

In his indigenous welcome to the assembly, Norman Meade of the Métis people voiced a preference for alternative wording: "Wild hope—I like to call it divine hope. We need divine hope to give us strength to go forward ... it's only through the divine strength of God that we can look forward to a better future for all of us." His sentiments transported me back in spirit to my eighth-grade graduation ceremony, where our class sang a popular song with the words:

"Many things about tomorrow, I don't seem to understand,

"But I know who holds tomorrow, and I know who holds my hand."

The song portrays an individualistic view of the way Jesus guides us day by day into an uncharted future. Our class surely sang it with a sheltered naivete about a rapidly changing world that would question some of our most basic and long-held assumptions about life, such as gender orientation. Nevertheless, the song expressed the divine hope voiced by the Métis elder: We believe that just as Jesus accompanied his disciples in the boat, he can address our fears and calm the storms we face.

To guide their church community through a daunting season of corporate change, our Canadian brothers and sisters have adopted two processes of communal discernment, each led by a task force. The first—Being a Faithful Church—is an effort to engage congregations all across Canada in biblically based moral discernment. Having focused on peacemaking and environmental concerns over the last several years, they are now discussing issues about same-sex inclusion.

The second change process is guided by the Future Directions Task Force, with the hope they can find more sustainable structures on the congregational, area church and national church levels. Both of these task forces reported at the biennial assembly and engaged delegates in table discussions.

Although the delegates reflected on the story of Jesus calming the storm, their calm deliberations were a far cry from the wild sea and emotional chaos of Jesus' disciples lashed by a squall. The delegates engaged the issues of same-sex marriage and unsustainable structures with a patient thoughtfulness that would serve well as a model for the Mennonite Church USA delegate assembly next year, when we will address similar issues.

Like our brothers and sisters in Canada, we should name an audacious hope in God as we face the storms that threaten our own church. Through humble trust in God, we will be able to navigate the unsettled waters that have roused our fears and threatened to fracture our relationships. We can rest assured that just as Jesus cared for his disciples in the midst of a storm, he also cares for us. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

Like our brothers and sisters in Canada, we should name an audacious hope in God as we face the storms that threaten our own church.

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Waiting in prayer

Gordon Houser

All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer.—Acts 1:14

When you feel at a loss, unsure how to proceed or what will happen next, what do you do? For the early Christians, the answer was to pray.

In Acts 1, the apostles see the Risen Jesus leave. They had hoped he would return the kingdom to Israel, but Jesus said, “It’s not for you to know the times or periods” (verse 7).

The lesson here is to live without knowing some things. Instead Jesus promises them power from the Holy Spirit.

Because we’ve always lived with Jesus’ absence, i.e., his physical absence, it’s difficult to imagine how hard this must have been for them. They’d lived with Jesus for years. They’d seen him die, then come back to life. And suddenly he’s gone. This had to have crushed their spirits.

What do they do? They pray.

Alan Kreider, who teaches at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., is a specialist on the early church. He notes that much of the Christian art from the first several centuries of the church depicts a person standing with arms raised in a posture of prayer.

> We can all pray, waiting for that wind and fire of the Spirit that is out of our control.

For the early Christians, prayer was a big deal.

In Acts 1, the apostles have been told to wait for the Spirit. They don’t even know what that means. But they know to pray. That’s how they are to wait.

This may be hard for us to imagine. When we feel at sea, unsure how to proceed, we may pray. But few of us, I imagine, constantly devote ourselves to prayer.

Waiting is difficult and may be seen as useless, simply allowing injustice to continue. We want to act, to do something. Patience is not only hard but may seem irresponsible.

In my book *Present Tense* (2011), I wrote: “Behind patience lies the theological truth, the belie that our life—all life—is a gift of God and that we are not in charge.” We’d rather be in charge.

Those early disciples of Jesus prayed and held on to the promise that the Holy Spirit would come. And when that happened, they acted. A great change occurred. And that change brought both joy and suffering.

Mennonite Church USA is in a time of waiting Praying may seem not only hard but useless. We want things settled, and they are not settled.

While we wait, some people are hurting. Others fear change. Nevertheless we can all pray, waiting for that wind and fire of the Spirit that is out of our control.

How might we pray? Here is one approach:

One of the tools that has helped people experience the divine is the Ignatian Spiritual Exercise developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola in the early 16th century. One of these exercises is called praying the Scriptures.

We do this by using our imaginations, placing ourselves in a biblical story, using our senses. Fo example, in the Acts 1 story, we can imagine smelling the olive trees, tasting the dust in the ai feeling the stony ground beneath our feet, hearin Jesus’ voice or seeing his face. Then we can imagine encountering Jesus or the Spirit and listen to what is said to us.

Having used this in church and personally, I’ve been amazed at what happens, at how people experience God’s presence.

“Let us pray” can be less a meaningless phras than a call to a life-changing experience.—*gh*

The Mennonite

Blessed to blaze new trails

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Eldon Hostetler
Olson, Trexler, Wolters & Bushnell

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- Killing print is more myopic thinking
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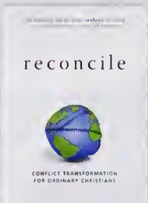
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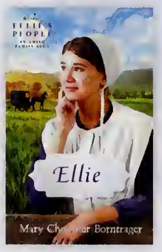
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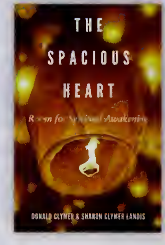
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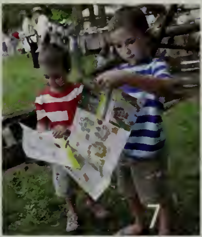

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Most influential ideas

Instead of fooling around with a "most influential Mennonites" survey (June) that smacks of the "who is the greatest" question found in Matthew 18, let's affirm the priesthood of all believers in which everyone is contributing.

Wouldn't it be more beneficial to discern what's motivating Mennonite Church USA? Might *The Mennonite* challenge its readers to elaborate the most influential ideas with which the church is grappling today?

Dare we start with "the giant triplets of racism, materialism and militarism" that our recently deceased brother Vincent Harding identified in Martin Luther King's 1967 Riverside Church speech?

And what might it mean when we realize that, while living in the belly of the militarized empire, some ideas that have historically shaped the church, such as conscientious objection to war, don't currently hold sway?—*H.A. Penner, Lancaster, Pa.*

Tears of joy and sadness

Central District Conference and the Executive Board met at identical times the weekend of June 26-28. Tears accompanied both meetings. At Central District Conference there were tears of joy as individuals from previously excluded congregations expressed their joy at belonging to a conference that unconditionally accepted their gifts and their presence. These testimonies warmed the hearts of those in the aud ence. These tears of joy become tears of frustration and sadness and the warmed hearts grew chilled at reading of the continued exclusion and rejection signaled by the report of the Executive Board.—*J. Denny Weaver, Madison, Wis.*

Thank you to those who are hurt

I have been trying to imagine how I would feel if I were an LGBT person reading and hearing all the discussion going on about "me" in the Mennonite church. I am created in the image of God, like everyone else, and did not choose my sexual orientation. Yet ther is all this intense discussion going on as to whether I am worthy to be a par of the church. There is a question whether or not my gifts may be used i ministry, whether or not I can get married to the love of my life, whether or not I should be allowed to teach in a church institution or if perhaps I may influence some young person to become gay.

To those of you who have been hur by the church because of who you are and are still seeking a place at the table, I say, "Thank you." To the chur leaders who have been willing to put their jobs in jeopardy by speaking and acting on behalf of those who are give no voice in this current discussion, I say, "Thank you." And to all of you wh may disagree with me but are still wil ing to be a part of my church family, I say, "Thank you." Let's listen to each other and stay together.—*Ruby Lehman, Harrisonburg, Va.*

A moral slippery slope

Some Mennonites are sliding down a slippery moral slope on the issue of h mosexuality. It is a movement from some concern for morality to little or no concern about morality. It is a mov ment from believing that there is no moral issue in same-sex people living in monogamous, covenanted relationships to accepting and believing the same about people in the LGBT move ment. What is the evidence? One example is the report in the January issue ("Gathering on LGBT Issues in Lancaster, Pa.").

Only God is the judge in each situation. However, if we profess to take the New Testament seriously, then we must take seriously passages such as Mark 7:20-23 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

Where is the evidence that the LGBT movement (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) has a concern for biblical morality? Willard Swartley, in his excellent but seemingly forgotten book, *Homosexuality: Biblical Interpretation and Moral Discernment*, shows that the sexual revolution had roots in the Woodstock event, which involved free sex and drugs. What has followed is a movement whose only moral criteria is love, defined as what pleases self and does not violate another. To get an update on the movement, just google LGBT and then each word individually. You will find much about sexual encounters and nothing about morality. This movement from accepting people in a covenanted relationship to generally accepting people in the LGBT movement shows a sliding from some concern for morality to little or no concern about morality. *—John R. Martin, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Planting of tobacco not faithful

I am new to the Lancaster, Pa., area and new to Christianity, looking for a church home. I am drawn to the beautiful countryside and simple life of the Mennonite community. However, I was utterly shocked by the sight of young children planting tobacco in the fields in the surrounding area and wondered, Can this church who serves a loving God be so ignorant? According to a Mennonite website, "We believe that we can live life simply and in service to others as a witness to God's love for the world. … We believe that the church is called to proclaim and to be a sign of the kingdom of God. Christ has commissioned the church to be his witnesses, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to observe all things he has commanded." For those who separate themselves in purity, I cannot stress how incongruous is the message of faith and love for fellow man with the practice of planting tobacco. "A filthy habit by its use results in physical injury and is scripturally inconsistent. The cultivation of and its use should be discouraged by both precept and example. Its use shall disqualify any member from ordination. No one shall be received into church membership who does not do all in his power to discontinue its use" (*Mennonite News*, 1870). This is a message that must be broadcast over and over until it sinks into all generations, as the

Mennonite community that labors to be set apart from sin appears to be illiterate profiteers.*—T.S. Martin III, Sinking Spring, Pa.*

We read the Bible differently

The answer to the debate about welcoming people from the LGBT community into the church cannot be resolved until we answer the question about how we read the Bible. For example, many people like to quote Leviticus 18:22, "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable." This, they say, is grounds to keep LGBT people from becoming members of the church.

But on the question of divorce and remarriage, people read the Bible through a different set of lenses. Romans 7:33 says, "So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress." Divorce and remarriage is a nonissue in the church today because we read the Bible differently than we did 30-40 years ago.

Until recently Blue Laws in Penn-

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

The story of Eldon Hostetler graces our cover this month (page 12). Hostetler, born in 1922, left the Amish church to become an influential agricultural inventor and entrepreneur.

Marty Lehman, former associate executive director for churchwide operation of Mennonite Church USA, proposed the story of Eldon to our staff earlier this year. The email from Lehman caught our eye when she wrote that Hostetler has over 65 patents. Hostetler represents a member of the business community whose faithfulness and dedication bless the church in various ways.

Also in the feature section, two articles address community in the church. In the first piece (page 17), Paul Born describes community as an investment that "takes time and effort." We do not necessarily experience the benefits of community immediately, and they may arise in unexpected ways. In the second piece (page 28), Earl Sears relates community and poverty. "People who are not wealthy are often aware of their dependence on each other," he writes.

This summer, many of us have followed the news of the thousands of Central American children taken into custody after crossing into the United States. Becky Helmuth, who manages our advertising and subscriptions, addresses this in her first editorial for *The Mennonite*. Helmuth attends North Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church, which is home to many South and Central American immigrants, some of whom are documented and some of whom are not.

I want to thank Gordon Houser and Becky for their hard work while I took maternity leave last month.

Finally, we are on track for our new website, which will launch this fall. We look forward to the new design, bloggers and capabilities for engagement.*—Editor*

Urban Anabaptist Ministry Symposium planned for Oct. 2-4

ELKHART, Ind.—Urban leaders and ministry experts will meet in Philadelphia Oct. 2-4 for the Urban Anabaptist Ministry Symposium.

"Beyond Ideas: Practical Ministry That Works" will be the theme of the event, which will take place at The Berean Institute. Sponsors are Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) East Coast.

"Beyond Ideas" will bring together community ministry professionals from Philadelphia, New York City, Washington, Hampton, Va., and the surrounding areas.

"This is not just classroom theory," says event co-planner Glen Alexander Guyton, chief operating officer for Mennonite Church USA. "This gathering will highlight the years of experience and the best practices of practical ministry application of people who are in the heart of urban communities."

"This is a grassroots gathering," adds event co-planner Chantelle Todman Moore, Philadelphia Program Coordinator for MCC East Coast. "When asked how Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Church USA could be a resource to and strengthen the local Anabaptist community, people named a desire for spaces where urban Anabaptist leaders could hear from each other and learn about the work that was happening in other neighborhoods or cities."

Registration costs $50 (includes breakfast and lunch). For the symposium schedule and to register, visit mcc.org/get-involved/events/urban-anabaptist-ministry-symposium.—*Mennonite Church USA*

photo provided

Bethel nursing students exceed national average

Paulette Wollenhaupt, assistant professor of nursing at Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., instructs a class of nursing students on the proper way to give an injection. For the third year in a row, Bethel College nursing graduates exceeded the national average pass rate for the licensure examination for registered nurses.—*Bethel College*

Three churches leave Virginia Conference

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va.—Three congregations formally left Virginia Mennonite Conference July 25 when delegates at the annual assembly passed motions to release them.

New Beginnings Church in Harrisonburg, Stuarts Draft Mennonite Church and Lambert Mennonite Church in Wymer, W.Va., requested their release as a result of recent actions within Mennonite Church USA regarding sexuality.

Eastern Mennonite University's listening process on hiring people in same-sex relationships and the licensing of Theda Good, a lesbian pastor, in Mountain States Mennonite Conference sparked conversations in Virginia Conference this spring.

Conference minister Clyde Kratz called the losses "painful and disappointing."—*Mennonite World Review*

Western District sends survey on sexuality and polity to churches

NORTH NEWTON, Kan.—Western District Conference asked member congregations to participate in a 20-question online survey as the first step in a conference-wide conversation responding to a resolution by Rainbow Mennonite Church in Kansas City, Kan., asking for greater latitude for churches and pastors to determine their pastoral response to people in same sex relationships.

The resolution came to the annual WDC assembly July 4-6 in Waxahachie Texas. Over the next year, a task force will study and seek input on issues of sexuality and church polity and give counsel to the district's Executive Board.—*WDC*

Ohio Conference resolution asking for discipline does not pass

MILLERSBURG, Ohio—An Ohio Conference resolution asking Mennonite Church USA to remove Mountain States Mennonite Conference from membership if it does not reverse its decision to license a lesbian minister did not pass Aug. 9 at a special delegat session.

The resolution needed two-thirds approval to pass, and it received 61.7 percent. The vote was 163-101 in favor of the resolution.

Delegates held three votes in an effort to pass a resolution of some sort re lated to the decision of Mountain States to license Theda Good, a pastor at First Mennonite Church in Denver. Good is in a committed same-sex relationship.

Although none of the resolutions passed, Ohio Conference minister Tom Kauffman said he saw thoughtful conversation throughout the day of round table discussions and open floor question-and-answer sessions at Martins Creek Mennonite Church.

Ohio Conference has 76 congregations and 11,098 members.—*Mennonite World Review*

CPT calls for support of refugees in Kurdistan

IRAQ—Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT)'s Iraqi Kurdistan team has partnered with WADI, an Iraqi-German organization, on several occasions in its work to end violence against women, including honor killings and female genital mutilation.

Because of the overwhelming humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Iraqi-Kurdistan, WADI is focusing on helping refugees. This time it is mainly Yazidis and Christians. Hundreds of thousands of them are seeking refuge in the Iraqi Kurdish Region. They narrowly escaped those from the Islamic State.

After the Syrian refugees (approximately 225,000) and then the wave of Internally Displaced Persons, this new wave of refugees is an immense challenge for the region, which has a population of about 5 million and is now accommodating over 1 million refugees.

Local people are willing to help and share, but the supply situation is tense. With temperatures rising to almost 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit), there is a lack of the most basic supplies, especially food, medicine, clothes, tents and lodging. The municipal infrastructure is overloaded, and the regional government and UN Refugee Agency are overwhelmed by the sheer number of refugees.

WADI, in cooperation with several local partners and activists, is providing relief on the ground. Each donation will directly benefit the people in distress. Go to www.cpt.org.—*CPT*

Sarah Gingrich

Scavenger hunt

Brothers Sayban (left) and Vincynt Fellenger of Reading, Pa., check out the scavenger hunt on their Global Fair maps. Children's activities, international foods, ethnic costumes to try on and more were part of Eastern Mennonite Missions' annual event on July 12 at the Hans Herr House and Museum.—*EMM*

Ron Sawatsky, Mennonite Church Canada leader, dies at 64

WATERLOO, Ontario—Ron Sawatsky, a key leader in the transition from the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (CMC) to Mennonite Church Canada, died June 28 in Warrington, Pa.

He became moderator of CMC in 1997 and continued in that role through the transition to MC Canada, which he served as moderator until 2002.

He earned a doctorate in religious studies from the University of Toronto in 1986 and served with Mennonite Central Committee in Akron, Pa. In 1999, he became chief executive officer of Rockhill Mennonite Community in Sellersville, Pa., and served until December 2012.—*Canadian Mennonite*

Collaborative MBA kicks off at Bluffton University

BLUFFTON, Ohio—The first cohort of The Collaborative MBA among Bluffton University, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., and Goshen (Ind.) College spent the week at Bluffton for a start-of-the-semester residency Aug. 11-15.

The first cohort of 13 students participated in an orientation to the program, interacted with their professors through video conferencing and finished a class on "Leadership for the Common Good" with George Lehman, the Howard Raid professor of business at Bluffton, chair of its business studies division and director of graduate programs in business.

The Collaborative MBA offers most of its courses through interactive video conferencing and projects in which students talk with their professors either via technology or in person. The curriculum is based on the concept of "leadership for the common good," emphasizing six values—spirituality, community, leading as service, justice, sustainability and global citizenship. —*Bluffton University*

Somalia president speaks to EMU leaders

HARRISONBURG, Va.—Somalia President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud topped off attendance at the historic U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit hosted by President Obama with a visit to Harrisonburg on Aug. 7, where he renewed 13-year-old ties with Eastern Mennonite University (EMU) and its Center for Justice and Peacebuilding.

Mohamud told EMU leaders: "I'd like to officially request your help for Somalia with the tools and techniques you have here, which are very life-saving tools—not [only] life-saving at the individual level but life-saving at a nation level."—*EMU*

The beauty of funerals

Cyneatha Millsaps is pastor of Community Mennonite Church in Markham, Ill.

One question I always hear people pondering is, Why do we only come together when someone dies?

I have often wondered this myself, because it is during funeral gatherings that I hear the best stories of family life, the roar of laughter long overdue and the promises to stay in touch. Family and friends travel from far and wide to show respect and their love for the deceased as well as the grieving family. As pastor I have to admit the best part of my job is funerals. You get to see people at their best and worse. You get to see them for who they really are. You find out more in a couple of days about a family and how they take care of one another (or not). I often say to people, "Your funeral will speak more about your life than your life ever did."

See, once we leave this place, the true essence of our being is released into the atmosphere and it cannot be hidden or covered any longer. Even if one person tries to keep your secrets, someone else will let the secrets out, for their own personal release. Death is not a bad thing. It gives us permission to "let go." That release, that "letting go," frees the person who is dying but also those around them. So once we let go, we are free to share our loved one and ourselves openly.

Your funeral will speak more about your life than your life ever did.

Funerals have some of the best family stories. Funny, gut-busting laughter can be heard throughout the days leading up to and shortly after the funeral. Tears provide comfort from friends and family who have not been able to show their affection. A high school friend, travels from another state, simply to give you a hug and let you know you are in their thoughts. Fear is often suppressed by the presence and promises of family and friends. A son reminds his mother that he will check in more often now that dad has passed on.

Funerals may seem like an unlikely place to see the joy and love of family, but surprisingly, that is where it often shows itself the most. Funerals show the loved ones left behind that others care. Funerals remind us that there are more important things than jobs, hobbies and even routi schedules. Funerals reveal to us that God is ultimately in control, and we need to pause and respect his work.

Jesus was called to the bedside of a dying littl girl. All the people had gathered. They were wa ing and praying in the house. When Jesus arrive he asked them to go outside, and he went into t room with the child. Jesus told them she was no dead but only sleeping.

When we gather together to mourn a lov one, we often speak about that person's life and how they affected our lives. We must remember that our loved ones who have passed away are also being raised into a new life with Christ Jesu Our sorrows are an important part of our life jou ney. Our sorrows are preparation for our letting go.

King Solomon in Ecclesiastes 7:1-3 put it this way: "A good name is bett than precious ointment, an the day of death, than the day of birth.

"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting for this is the end of every one, and the living will lay to heart.

"Sorrow is better than laughter, for by sadness of countenance the heart is made glad."

Why do we only come t gether when someone die Because it may be the only time we can stop our busy lives and reflect on t people and things that really matter. Death give us permission to examine our lives and change course, if that is what is needed.

When you go to the next funeral of a friend o loved one, pause and really look around at what going on with the people. Encourage stories of j and love into that space. Celebrate the honor of sharing in that life.

World War I and the global church

Late in the morning of June 28, 1914, Gavrilo Princip, a young Serbian nationalist standing in a crowd in Sarajevo, Bosnia, drew a pistol and fired two shots into a passing motorcade, killing Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary and his wife, Sophia. Although it seemed at the time to be a matter of only local significance, the event triggered a rapid sequence of escalating diplomatic reactions. Within a few short weeks, all of Europe's major powers had declared war.

The devastation that followed defies the imagination. By the end of 1914, the Austro-Hungarian army had already suffered more than 1.27 million casualties, the French around a million, with some 800,000 Germans killed or wounded. When hostilities finally ceased in 1918, trench warfare, machine guns and mustard gas had become household words, a whole generation of young men had disappeared, and millions of civilians struggled to restore order and meaning to their disrupted lives.

Although the global church today may seem far removed from the events that unfolded in Europe 100 years ago, the aftershocks of the First World War can still be felt, and the lessons of that traumatic conflict are still worth pondering.

1. The world is deeply interconnected. As most historians now acknowledge, the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand was not the cause of the First World War, only the spark that set other events in motion. Long before June 28, 1914, the empires of Europe had been engaged in a frantic competition to extend their power and influence around the world. So when a relatively minor crisis emerged, the response of one nation inevitably affected the others—and, ultimately, the world. Since then, the webs of global interdependence have become even thicker. Today, isolation is not an option. The pressing question is how we will manage our interconnectedness.

2. Be cautious about the claims of nationalism. In retrospect, World War I seems inevitable in part because so many ordinary people in 1914 were wildly enthusiastic about the war, regarding it as an opportunity to demonstrate the virtues of duty and honor on behalf of the Fatherland. By the end of the war—following the death of 16 million people—those patriotic sentiments sounded hollow.

3. Group identity is not simple. The collapse of the Hapsburg, German and Russian empires following the war gave rise to new questions regarding political identity. President Wilson's principle of "self determination" sounded positive, but it did not clarify what the basis for new groups would be: language? ethnicity? religion? cultural memory? abstract ideals? The violent events in the century since then—in the Balkans, parts of Africa, the former Soviet Union, Iraq and Israel/Palestine—are all legacies of these unresolved questions.

4. The costs of war extend far beyond the battlefield. World War I made it clear that the war did not end when the fighting stopped and the dead were buried. Veterans with missing limbs and lingering trauma of shell shock (what we know today as PTSD) were visible reminders of the ongoing costs of war. The grief of widows and orphans and the loss of irreplaceable cultural treasures were less visible but no less real.

Next summer, as centennial observances of World War I continue, thousands of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ believers from around the world will gather in Harrisburg, Pa., to celebrate the 16th assembly of Mennonite World Conference (MWC).

That gathering of 103 member churches is a visible witness to the fact that we are indeed interconnected—we cannot live in isolation from each other. But our connection to each other is based on love, trust and mutual regard, not on a quest for dominance.

Like Mennonite Church USA, most MWC members are national churches. But we gather as brothers and sisters in the family of Christ, not to defend or promote our countries.

The identity of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite church is not always clear. Differences of belief, practice and worship styles reveal tensions between our groups and within our churches. Ultimately, however, identity is not something we create. It is a gift of our shared life in Christ, incarnated in visible ways in the world.

Finally, at our gathering next summer, we will bring with us the lingering pain and brokenness of our past. We have much to lament. But the MWC assembly also has the potential to heal wounds, restore strength to withered limbs and give new life to the spiritually dead or wounded.

As we remember the beginnings of the First World War, let us also recall that the body of Christ bears witness to a different reality. TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

Identity is not something we create. It is a gift of our shared life in Christ, incarnated in visible ways in the world.

The terror African-American men face in America

In less than a month, from July 17 to Aug. 11, in separate incidents—in Staten Island, N.Y., Beavercreek, Ohio, Ferguson, Mo., and Los Angeles—four unarmed African-American men were killed by police (www.motherjones.com).

In his blog at sojo.net, Ryan Herring writes, "To be young and black in the United States means to live under constant pressure, something most non-black American citizens know nothing about" ("When Terror Wears a Badge," Aug. 14).

While our government fights a war on terrorism, many African Americans experience terror everyday. As Cornel West has said, "To be black in America for 400 years is to be unsafe, unprotected, subject to random violence and hated."

Herring notes that "more Americans have lost their lives at the hands of police since 9/11 than in acts officially classified as terrorism. A recent study showed that one black man was killed every 28 hours by police, security guards or self-appointed vigilantes in 2012."

Beyond the threat of lethal violence is the daily grind of being constantly watched by police, suspected of wrongdoing simply because of the color of one's skin.

A further threat from police is being arrested and falsely accused. In *The New Yorker* (Aug. 4), Nicholas Schmidle writes about Tyrone Hood, who has been in prison for 21 years for a murder he likely did not commit. The article goes into great detail, with many interviews, to trace the course of events that led to Hood's arrest and conviction.

Those events included witnesses who told the reporter that Chicago police threatened them with a gun until they said they saw Hood kill Marshal Morgan, a 20-year-old basketball star. Turns out, they didn't witness that.

A series of articles ran in 2001 in the Chicago *Tribune* titled "Cops and Confessions." The reporters described how Chicago police had relied on "coercive and illegal tactics" to solicit dubious confessions. Among the articles was a profile of Kenneth Boudreau, one of the officers in Hood's case who had obtained incriminating statements from several witnesses.

The article pointed out that Boudreau "had targeted suspects especially vulnerable to intimidation, including teenagers and the mentally retarded, and stood accused of 'punching, slapping or kicking' them." He had helped elicit at least five confessions from suspects who were later acquitted.

Schmidle interviews him, and Boudreau doesn't budge from his belief that Hood is guilty, despite much evidence to the contrary.

The man who most likely did the murder later murdered several other people. Meanwhile, Hood remains in prison.

In the Aug. 11 and 18 *New Yorker*, Malcolm Gladwell discusses the book *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City* by Alice Goffman, who for six years lived in a low-income neighborhood of Philadelphia and documented the lives of two young African-American men.

"They tried to get an education and legitimate jobs, only to find themselves thwarted," Gladwell writes. "Selling crack was a business they entered only because they believed that all other doors were closed to them."

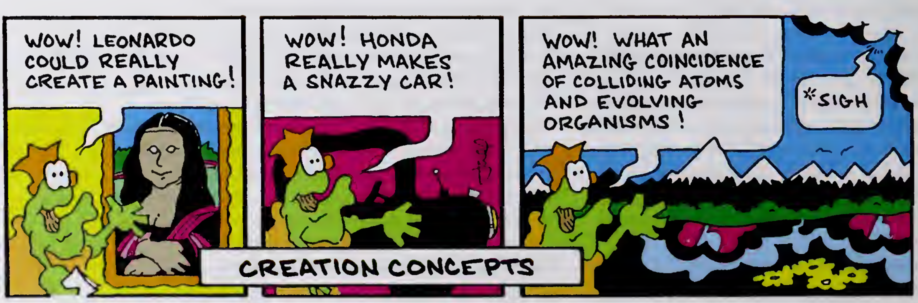
Gladwell compares the climb of Italian crime families in the 1950s and '60s into legitimacy with that of African Americans today. Back then, cops were paid to overlook crime and focused more on hunting Communists.

Today's law enforcement is different. "Between 1960 and 2000, the ratio of police officers to Philadelphia residents rose by almost 70 percent," Gladwell writes.

A black man in America faces many systemic barriers. Whatever we can do to help change those barriers will help make God's justice for all more visible.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


WOW! LEONARDO COULD REALLY CREATE A PAINTING!
WOW! HONDA REALLY MAKES A SNAZZY CAR!
WOW! WHAT AN AMAZING COINCIDENCE OF COLLIDING ATOMS AND EVOLVING ORGANISMS!
*SIGH
CREATION CONCEPTS

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—compiled by Gordon Houser

> “Prayer is the life of Jesus coming alive in you.—Rowan Williams in *Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer*”

10 poverty myths, busted

1. Single moms are the problem. Only 9 percent of low-income, urban moms have been single throughout their child's first five years. Thirty-five percent were married to or in a relationship with the child's father for that entire time.

2. Absent dads are the problem. Sixty percent of low-income dads see at least one of their children daily. Another 16 percent see their children weekly.

3. Black dads are the problem. Among men who don't live with their children, black fathers are more likely than white or Hispanic dads to have a daily presence in their kids' lives.

4. Poor people are lazy. In 2004, there was at least one adult with a job in 60 percent of families on food stamps that had both kids and a nondisabled, working-age adult.

A Congressional Budget Office study shows that the concentration of lightly taxed investment income was the source of

80%

of the increase in inequality from 2002 to 2007.—*The Atlantic*

5. If you're not officially poor, you're doing OK. The federal poverty line for a family of two parents and two children in 2012 was $23,283. Basic needs cost at least twice that in 615 of America's cities and regions.

6. Go to college, get out of poverty. In 2012, about 1.1 million people who made less than $25,000 a year, worked full time and were heads of household had a bachelor's degree.

7. We're winning the war on poverty. the number of households with children living on less than $2 a day per person has grown 160 percent since 1996, to 1.65 million families in 2011.

8. The days of old ladies eating cat food are over. The share of elderly single women living in extreme poverty jumped 31 percent from 2011 to 2012.

9. The homeless are drunk street people. One in 45 kids in the United States experiences homelessness each year. In New York City alone, 22,000 children are homeless.

10. Handouts are bankrupting us. In 2012, total welfare funding was 0.47 percent of the federal budget.—*Mother Jones*

I know what you did last Sunday

On the phone, 36 percent of Americans report attending religious services weekly or more, while 30 percent say they seldom or never go. But online, a smaller share (31 percent) of people surveyed said they attended church at least weekly, while a larger portion (43 percent) admitted they seldom or never go.—*Religion News Service*

Unrequited love

To gauge the interreligious emotions of the American public, the Pew Research Center asked thousands of Americans about their religious identification and then asked them to rate other religious groups on "a feeling thermometer," where a zero was "the coldest, most negative possible rating" and 100 was "the warmest, most positive" response. White evangelicals gave Jews a full 69 percent of emotional warmth (very high, by the survey's standards), while Jewish respondents gave evangelical Christians a frosty 34 percent—one of the lowest ratings in the entire Pew data set.—*Religion News Service*

Numbers to ponder

- Minimum percentage change in the past year in the number of reported cases of sexual assault in the U.S. military: +50
- Date on which the Army suspended its chief sexual assault prosecutor for an alleged sexual assault: 2/21/2014
- Number of minutes Mexican men and women work each day, respectively: 580, 607
- Respective percentage of that work that is unpaid: 19, 62
- Ratio of mentally ill people held in U.S. state prisons and jails to those held in state psychiatric hospitals: 10:1
- Percentage of Egyptians who say it is necessary to believe in God to be moral: 95
- Percentage of Americans who do: 53
- Of Chinese: 14
- Factor by which an Army soldier is more likely than the average American to be diagnosed with intermittent explosive anger: 5
- By which a heterosexual U.S. woman is more likely to be killed by her intimate partner if he owns a handgun: 5
- Percentage of homicides by white women of black men that are deemed justifiable on the grounds of self-defense: 14
- By black women of white men: 3
- Portion of all online advertising that is never seen by a human being: ½
- Minimum percentage of ATMs worldwide that operate on Windows XP: 95
- Date on which Microsoft stopped providing tech support for the operating system: 04/08/2014

—*Harper's*

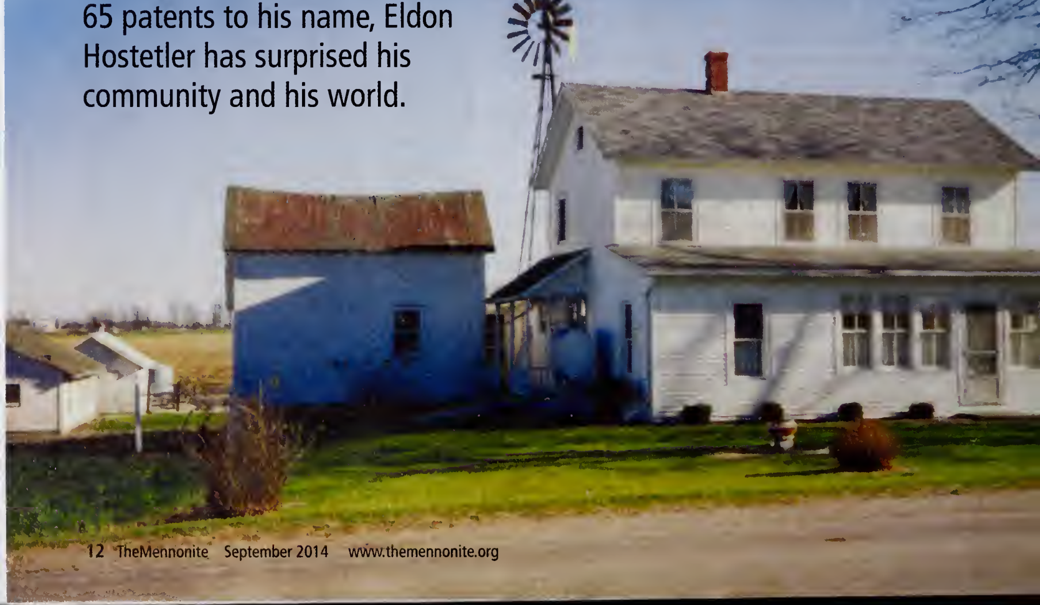
Blessed to blaze new trails

Eldon Hostetler left the Amish church to become an inventor and entrepreneur.

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Eldon Hostetler in his later years.
Photos provided by Norm Kauffmann

From the first week of his life as an Amish baby until today as a 91-year-old inventor and entrepreneur with more than 65 patents to his name, Eldon Hostetler has surprised his community and his world.



After Hostetler was born on Christmas in 1922, the eldest of 13 children to the late Lizzie and Mahlon Hostetler, he was blessed in a Jewish temple. He was the only Amish young man in his community in Shipshewana, Ind., to own a car. As an adult inventor, he received patents around the world for poultry-raising equipment. And in retirement, he donated his Hudson car collection to a museum in Shipshewana.

These are unusual experiences for someone born Amish who received only an eighth-grade education. However, Hostetler, now a member of North Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church, says God called him to take the path less traveled and, in many cases, to blaze new trails. One trail was blazed from his father's fulfillment of the wishes of the late Dr. Black, a Jewish physician who delivered Hostetler into this world.

"Dr. Black told my father that I was a real God send and that he wanted my father to bring me to a Jewish temple in Ligonier, Ind., so they could perform the usual Jewish rite," said Hostetler, of Middlebury, during a mid-July telephone interview.

An influential person

"After the ceremony, the rabbi told my father he thought I was going to be an influential person in the world. My father waited until he was 70 to tell me this story. He said at the time of the circumcision he didn't give the rabbi's comment much thought. But later he realized that I would never have been able to do what I did without that blessing."

This experience would not have occurred if his father hadn't operated on the outer fringes of Amish tradition, Hostetler said. Coupled with his father's free-thinking were the innovative tendencies of his maternal grandfather. Hostetler was the firstborn grandchild of the late David and Anna (Bontrager) Shrock, who had only daughters. And so Hostetler was like a son to his grandfather, a thresher.

Hostetler's parents owned the Pashan Farm in Shipshewana, near where Hostetler attended a one-room school. His maternal grandparents lived about 500 feet south of this farm. His paternal grandparents, the late David and Leah (Lambright) Hostetler, lived in Emmatown, Ind., where they grew mint, spearmint and peppermint.

"My Grandpa Shrock had tractors and threshing machines, and I was much more interested in that stuff than in farming with my father," Hostetler said. "I helped grandfather renovate machinery. He was Amish, but he traded his steam engine in for a gasoline-fired tractor when I was 4 years old. That was considered a worldly thing to do, and he shouldn't have been doing it, but he did."

In his book *The Life and Times of Eldon "Ziggity" Hostetler: An Autobiography*, Hostetler writes about how his grandfather traded in his steam engine for a gasoline-powered 20-40 Huber tractor. "Dad took me in the buggy to Goshen [Ind.], and I was privileged to drive back with Grandpa on the tractor, which went three times as fast as the steam engine would go in high gear. On the way back, we stopped to buy a spring wagon that he later converted to what we call an 'oil wagon.' He had a 50-gallon drum with his fuel and oil and things on it, and he pulled it hundreds of miles around the country doing threshing."

Hostetler said that when he was 18, he was helping his Grandpa Shrock in his shop one day when his grandpa told him he felt Hostetler would not stay Amish. "He then said that if I promised never to tell my mother where I got the money, he would loan me $350 to buy my first car, a 1938 Hudson," Hostetler said. "I was the only person in our community who had a car, and so I hauled a lot of Amish people around. They paid me so much per mile and gave me R stamps [stamps used by farmers] so I could buy gas. It was during World War II, and I couldn't get tires. I had to recap those tires until I couldn't recap them anymore." So he traded in the 1938 Hudson for a 1940 model with 27,000 miles, the second of many cars he owned in the coming decades.

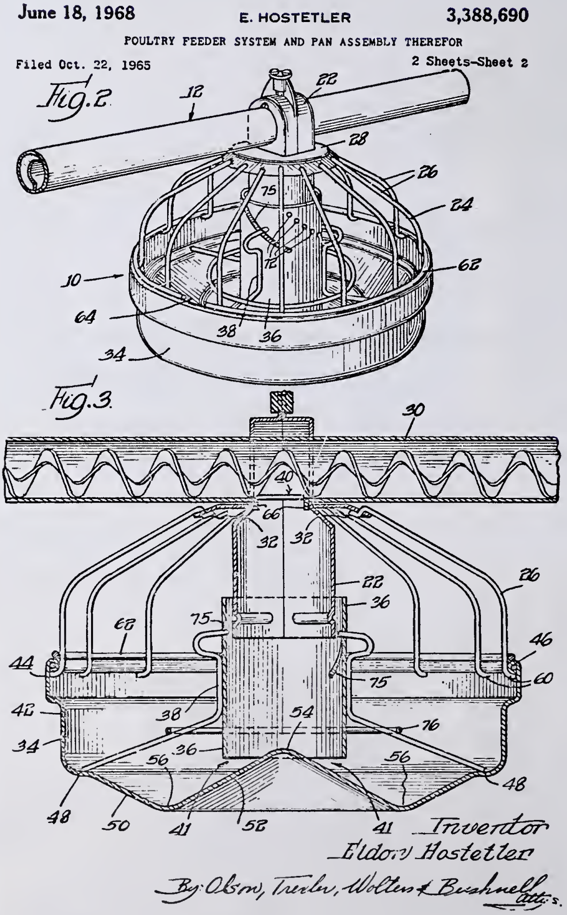
After the ceremony, the rabbi told my father he thought I was going to be an influential person in the world.—Eldon Hostetler

Leniency and legalism shape the faith of a young man

This leniency in conjunction with the more legalistic stance of his mother and paternal grandparents shaped Hostetler's views about God and religion, he said. The mixed milieu—though oft-confusing—was steeped in a faith that later guided Hostetler out of the Amish community into the Mennonite church.

Two of the more striking memories about faith

Ninety percent of all broilers grown in the world are fed and watered with stuff I designed, as well as copies of it.—Eldon Hostetler



Patent drawings showing the inner workings of the monoline feeder system with pan assembly

involved his paternal grandfather, Hostetler said "I remember how grandfather held me on his lap showed me pictures in the Bible story book and told me how important it was to obey God. That made such a deep impression on me."

Equally impressive was his memory of the conflict between his father and grandfather. In the late 1920s, when Hostetler was about 6 or 7, the family attended a conservative Mennonite church—a choice of his father's that his mother prayed would change, Hostetler said. She did no like the fact that the services were sometimes i English and that some of the people drove cars t church. About this time, his father put a down payment on a 1927 Chrysler, a decision that evoked a visit from his father's parents.

"Dad and I had just come into the house from working in the fields," Hostetler said. "When Da saw his parents, he said, 'I think you are here because I put a down payment on a car.' Mother ra out of the room crying but later came back. Grandpa said that if Dad took delivery on that ca then he would have to take Dad off his inheritan list. Dad replied, 'The Bible says that the love of money is the root of all evil.' Grandpa started cr ing and said, 'You are my child and I'll never quit loving you. But if you get that car, I will have to disinherit you. On the other hand, if you give up that car, and they won't give you your money back, then I will pay you that amount.' " His fath decided against buying the car.

Leaving boyhood behind

Hostetler said it was in the midst of that powe ful emotion that he first knew he didn't want to join the Amish church. He did not want to risk th same kinds of things happening to him. He took his first steps off the farm into work in 1944 and soon after out of the Amish church. That year he married Edna Yoder, whose brother Joe worked a Creighton Brothers in Warsaw, Ind., the largest leghorn farm and hatchery in the United States. Hostetler, who had been deferred on the farm by the LaGrange County draft board, was then deferred by Creighton when he was hired to work there.

His jobs included catching leghorn pullets on range and moving them into laying houses for eg production, traying eggs for the incubators, and egg grading. He later became certified to do poultry blood-testing. Hostetler then moved into the world of invention and innovation. After he became manager of the hatchery at Creighton Brothers, his hands-on work with bird selection and trap nesting led to his learning about poultry genetics. He began a hobby of cross-breeding for a better and larger white bird that had more breast meat. His experimentation led to a new breed of broilers, the White Meateor.

His first patent was for the E-Z Feeder, an automatic feeder system. In conjunction with having a mind that quickly retained large amounts of details, spiritual experiences sometimes inspired him, he said. "One night, I came home from work after having trouble getting the old feeder to work," he said. "Ground corn cob and little chunks of rock got stuck in-between the sprocket wheels and stopped the machine. I fell into a deep sleep, and all of a sudden on the bedroom wall flashed a vision of what would make that feeder work better. I got up at 2 a.m. and drove to the plant in Elkhart and started pulling the old machine apart to reassemble it. "

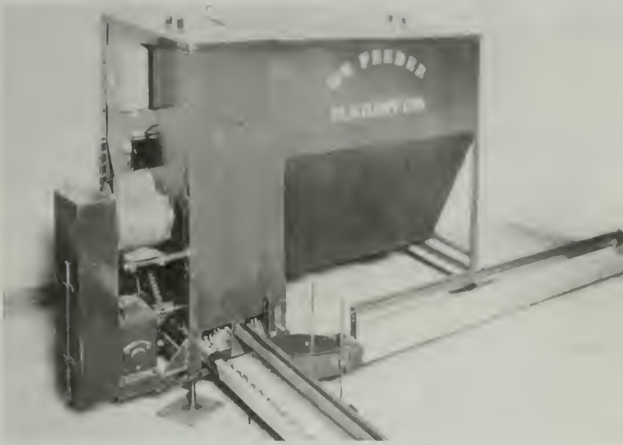
That reassembled feeder became the E-Z Feeder, followed by many other inventions, including the Ziggity watering system, Chore-Time feeders and a ceiling-mounted winch system that was used to raise and lower the feeding system. In April 1977, he opened his own company, Ziggity Systems, Inc. It enabled him to sell his newest product at the time—a snap-in, nipple-type drinker for poultry.

"As a person without an education beyond eighth grade, it was hard to get more educated folks to listen to my ideas for how to do things more efficiently," he said. "Without an engineering degree, I had to swim twice as fast upstream in order to contribute my gifts. But today, there are 200 million broilers processed every week in United States. Ninety percent of all broilers grown in the world are fed and watered with stuff I designed, as well as copies of it."

Transitioning from life with Edna to life with Esta

In the fall of 1975, a year and a half before he started Ziggity Systems, his first wife, the late Edna (Yoder) Hostetler, was diagnosed with cancer. For the previous several decades, they had been busy raising a family of six children—MaryEtta, Ruby Arlene, LeAnna, Dale Eugene, Robert Dean and Eldon Jr. And in the mid-1960s, they transitioned from being part of a conservative Mennonite church to becoming members at North Goshen. She died on April 22, 1977, when she was in her 50s.

In April 1978, Hostetler married Esta Yoder, a member of North Goshen and a longtime secretary at Goshen College. "I was 43, and he was 55, and I had not married before," she said. "In a very short time, I became a wife, a stepmother to six and a grandmother to eight." She also became Hostetler's travel companion on business trips as well as his fellow collector of unusual Hudson antique cars.



Hostetler's first patented invention, the E-Z Feeder, an automatic feeder system

In late 1997, Hostetler met with Norm Kauffmann, then manager for the Town of Shipshewana, to explore the gifting of 50 of the cars to the town. "It was a long journey from that first meeting until the completion of the museum [Hostetler's Hudson Auto Museum, located in Shipshewana Town Center] in 2007," Kauffmann said during a late July telephone interview.

Entrepreneurship is given by God to the church and is a way for people to use their God-given gifts in ways to bless other people.
—Ervin Stutzman

"In our many conversations, it was clear he maintained a deep respect for his parents and grandparents over the years, even though he was no longer Amish. He had a profound appreciation for that tradition. ... His faith was at the core of who he was. It was something that always rooted his life."

Kauffmann said he was struck by how much

Museum groundbreaking ceremony held Aug. 25, 2005. Left to right, Kevin Carlson, Dean Morgan, Eldon and Esta Hostetler and Roger Yoder, Shipshewana Town Council President.

Hostetler invented and how creative he was. "His creativity was not allowed to come out in the Amish community, so that is why I think his parents and grandparents encouraged him to go do what he had to do," he said.

"He didn't have a lot of book learning, but he had an amazing ability to observe life and figure things out. He spent a lot of time in the chicken house and figured out that turkeys would only drink out of green containers and chickens only out of red ones. He tried to share his new design ideas at his work places. And if the people would not do it with him, he would go somewhere else where they would."

Eldon and Esta Hostetler pose next to one of their cars in Hostetler's Hudson Auto Museum in Shipshewana, Ind.

Serving by inventing

It was a spirit of serving God by inventing that Ervin Stutzman, executive director of Mennonite Church USA, sensed in Hostetler when he met the couple earlier this year, he said during a late July telephone interview. They visited with Stutzman about his book *Jacob's Choice*, historical fiction about a common Amish ancestor, Jacob Hochstetler.

"Two things struck me about Eldon," Stutzman said. "First, he was blessed by a Jewish rabbi, which became a formative part of Eldon's journey And second, it is really unusual for one person to have that many patents. It makes me wonder if more Mennonites that we don't know about have patents, too.

"When I travel around Mennonite Church USA I ask business folks to show me what they do. We don't often hear from the pulpit how God speaks to business people. But I have discovered, through serving as a devotional Bible study leade for MEDA [Mennonite Economic Development Association], that many entrepreneurs deeply incorporate their faith with their work.

"Entrepreneurship is given by God to the church and is a way for people to use their God-given gifts in ways to bless other people."

Blessing other people and doing good work were central to Hostetler's drive to create—values he learned when he sat on his grandpa's lap, listening to Bible stories.

"At Ziggity Systems, we never had a meeting to talk about how we could make more money," Hostetler said. "Our goal was making a better product, and the money followed.

"Today I still try to help as much as I can, but there isn't much energy left anymore. But one thing I will never do is stop thanking God for all the ways he has blessed me. ... If Grandfather were alive today, I would tell him that the things he told me I have never forgotten and that I have learned they are true."

Laurie Oswald Robinson is a free-lance writer in Newton, Kan., and the author of Forever Family.

The joy of together

by Paul Born

"I really do not want more community than we already have at this church," shared a parishioner during a Sunday morning adult Sunday school discussion. "What I like about this church is that no one judges you for not being more involved or attending regularly. If we had more community, people would expect too much from me."

Deepening community enhances our lives and our faith.

Susan Gingerich

I remember being dumbstruck when I heard these words, especially in this church context, having never considered that a Mennonite congregation or any if its members would not embrace community as one of its central organizing principles.

Though I need to admit that my afterthought was, Maybe he's right; if community means I'm expected to be present every Sunday, give money, sit on at least one committee, join a smaller fellowship group, contribute to monthly potluck and provide meals and support to congregational members who are sick or in need, who has the time or energy for all that?

Maybe this is the same reason so many people do not know their neighbors. Do we really want to know when they're sick? Do we want to help them seed a new lawn or dig up one to plant a garden? Do we want to trust them enough to lend them a car or even our favorite kitchen tool?

It would be so much easier to be anonymous in the crowd; come and go as I like, care only for those I choose and when I choose. I love this feeling of being free, anonymous: living life on my terms. Besides, my days are so full, I'm constantly with people and exhausted most days when I get home. I deserve that glass of wine by myself, in the back yard, quiet all around ("keep that dog inside" and "only cut your lawn from 11-12 Saturday morning" kind-of-quiet), feet-up, alone.

Having others in your life that you trust can help you make sense of who you are and helps shape your identity and recognize the gifts you have to offer.

Alone

I often feel alone and I do not like it. I find this feeling especially troublesome when I'm in the midst of a crowd. You know that feeling you get when you go to a restaurant alone, or you are at a reception and there's an awkward moment when everyone is talking to someone other than you?

I'm not talking about the introverted side of me that loves time alone: to read, re-energize and sit in the quiet of my own thoughts. I'm talking about this deep-pitted feeling that it is all up to me. In the midst of the crowd—people all around, even people that love me—I get this anxious feeling and hear this recurring voice that reminds me to take care of yourself, because no one else will.

A friend reminded me once that we die alone. Therefore, as we age, this pervasive sense of alone is a kind of preparation for death. That may be the most depressing thought anyone has ever shared with me.

What I find curious is that this alone feeling is not related to the loneliness I feel at times. Loneliness may happen when I'm missing someone or wishing I was with others. I actually like that feeling, since it indicates I still love and want to be around those who are dear to me. By viewing loneliness through this lens, it means I'm very much alive. It is a part of living in community.

Community

During an interview, a young man just out of high school said, "When I'm in community I do not feel alone." He was clearly an introvert, shy and self-conscious. But for him, this feeling of belonging was the antidote of feeling alone.

Community has many benefits, and feeling a sense of belonging is likely the most important. A sense of belonging means we feel we are in the right place: we feel welcome and embraced in a place or with a group. To belong is to be cared for and reciprocate that caring; to know that I am home. It is a willingness to extend our identity to a group of people or an experience.

Having others in your life that you trust can help you make sense of who you are and helps shape your identity and recognize the gifts you have to offer. The African term "ubuntu," often used by Nelson Mandela, means "I am human because I belong. My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up in yours."

Community can better your economic prospects. Those in your community—family, friends, fellow church members and neighbors—can help you find a job, lend you money for a business or to buy a house. They can also teach you t garden or help you learn a new skill. They can support you when you are unemployed and help you choose an educational direction. They can bind together to create a credit union, a school or a community foundation, which all enhance your economic prospects.

Community makes us healthier. Heart surgeon Dean Ornish wrote a book entitled *Love and Survival*. In it he shares his observations of patients with many supportive relationships and how they were more than twice as likely to recover well and live longer compared with those who had fewer or no close relationships. Therefore, the love, emotional support and positive healing energy others bring us during times of illness contribute to our healing just as much as medical science and procedures.

Perhaps the best reason to pursue more community in our lives is that it makes us happier. A whole body of thinking now catching on is known as the "Economics of Happiness." Its core is the argument that our GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is not a good measure of human progress. We should instead be measuring those things that enhance our collective quality of life. One of the leading scholars advancing this idea is John Helliwell, a world-renowned professor at the University of British Columbia, who concludes his talks by leading the audience in singing, "The more we get together, the happier we'll be."

A missed opportunity

Our Mennonite churches are struggling to maintain membership growth. Many are losing their young people to other denominations, or they are stepping away from church altogether. Most of our Mennonite institutions have opened up to "non-Mennonite" membership, not so much to enhance their mission but to survive.

Most blame this decline in church attendance on shifting priorities in the larger society and people moving away from a faith identity.

What has contributed to my own Mennonite identity has been both a belief system that forms my faith and the historical Mennonite community I belong to. This identity certainly includes borscht and shoofly pie but also peace and service. My Mennonite identity and the people who have shaped it make up for me and many others in our congregations an important core of our sense of community.

Have we taken the importance of our identity as a community for granted? Have we downplayed the community aspect of our faith in order to emphasize the religious or spiritual dimension? I believe we have, and this certainly must be considered when we look to determine the reason for struggling churches.

The imbalance between the community life of a congregation and the spiritual or faith life of a congregation may be contributing to a loss of commitment and membership. Young people, adults in transition or anyone struggling in life and questioning their faith need their community identity and a sense of belonging.

I know there are those who will immediately say that the two are inseparable for them. Their spiritual and church lives are one and the same. I say, Try for a moment to separate them and recognize the ceremonies we use to strengthen our faith and those that strengthen our community life. They are connected, but it may be helpful to view them as separate to see how we might strengthen each.

Our spiritual life is enhanced through studying the Bible, prayer, sermons, Communion, singing and generally worshiping together. These also support a communal life and bind us in a common experience, though their primary purpose is to strengthen our spiritual life.

Our communal life is enhanced by small group gatherings in our homes or through potlucks, where we sit together and visit; through gathering to celebrate a wedding or mourn together at a member's funeral; through bringing meals to the sick or visiting each other in the hospital; through organizing peace walks, credit unions, foundations, schools, service projects or being together at the Mennonite relief sale. These actions all build faith as we act on our beliefs, but their primary purpose is to strengthen the well-being of the community and community life.

The imbalance between the community life of a congregation and the spiritual or faith life of a congregation may be contributing to a loss of commitment and membership.

Deepening community

At my home congregation, Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ontario, we are taking four Sunday adult education hours to explore the role of community in our congregational life. The goal of this exploration is to celebrate our communal life by sharing our stories and to consider the importance of and restore our commitment to a communal life together.

We are exploring community by considering these four concepts.

Sharing our story

The journey begins as we share our stories, be they stories of fears or of joy. Sharing helps us open up, become vulnerable and hear other people's stories. Thus we begin to work together to distinguish truth from untruth and rational fear from irrational fear and determine what we might do together. When we really hear one another, the bond of community is forged between us. We smile at each other; we feel warmth and joy as if we are home. In these times, we must make it a priority to take time for community. We need one another now, and we will need one another even more as times become more difficult.

Enjoying one another

As we continue to share our stories and do so with the same players over time, reciprocity and trust grow between us. This is an investment in deepening community, and the dividends this investment pays will be crucial to us in times of need. When we enjoy one another in a community we have invested in, we become a collective witness to the events around us. We can celebrate our achievements and those of our children together. How sweet are the victories and even failures that are experienced in community!

Mutual acts of caring often forge a sense of belonging.

Taking care of one another

Reciprocity and trust have a wonderful effect: reaching out to help one another becomes as natural as breathing. We take care of one another not only because it is the right thing to do and not only because people will help us if we help them but primarily because the bond of love that has grown between us moves us to do so. Mutual acts of caring often forge a sense of belonging. When we feel we belong, we feel safe and fulfilled, and when we feel safe and fulfilled, we can dare to develop hope and common purpose. We have the strength to overcome, together, almost any challenge that comes our way.

Deeping Community: Finding Joy Together in Chaotic Times by Paul Born (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2014, $18.95) argues for the importance of community in shaping our identity and quenching our thirst for belonging. Born, a Mennonite, writes for a general audience, though he draws from his own experience as well as others. He outlines a helpful continuum of community experience, delineating no community, shallow community, fear-based community and deep community, the goal he says is best for all of us. While he acknowledges that "community is not automatic," he says that it is key. "No amount of talent or hard work matters if people do not share a sense of community," he writes. "The deeper the community, the easier and better the outcome."—*Gordon Houser*

Building a better world together

The above three acts of community—sharing our stories, enjoying one another and taking care of one another—give us energy for the fourth act of deepening community: building a better world together. In fact, we become a force for change that is unstoppable. The work of restoring our communities feels light and possible. We no longer feel alone in our fear or hopeless in our dreams; rather, we have the courage to see our dreams become real.

Each Sunday, we share a Bible verse, introduce the topic for exploration, and then two members of the congregation share their experience of community. We then take time to share our experiences in small groups. During the four Sundays, we are able to answer these questions: How do we come to know each other's stories? When do we have fun together, and why is this important for our congregational life? When have we felt cared for by this congregation, and when have we had the opportunity to give or express our caring to others in our community? What do we do together to make the world a better place, and how has working together this way deepened our commitment to our congregational life?

Investing in community

Like any investment, community takes time an effort. We spend years investing for our retirement, setting aside dollars in order to live a good life in our old age. Our financial advisors tell us to start this process early, when we are young, in order to have enough when we're old (though they're always quick to add that it's never too late to start). Investing in relationships to deepen community reaps a similar benefit. A strong family, a faith community or club, neighbors we can rely on and friends who make the hours pass quickly—these are equally worthy investments. The skills we learn by seeking and living in community, and the network of relationships we build will provide us with the joy and security we need, especially should we experience times of loneliness, financial insecurity or failing health.

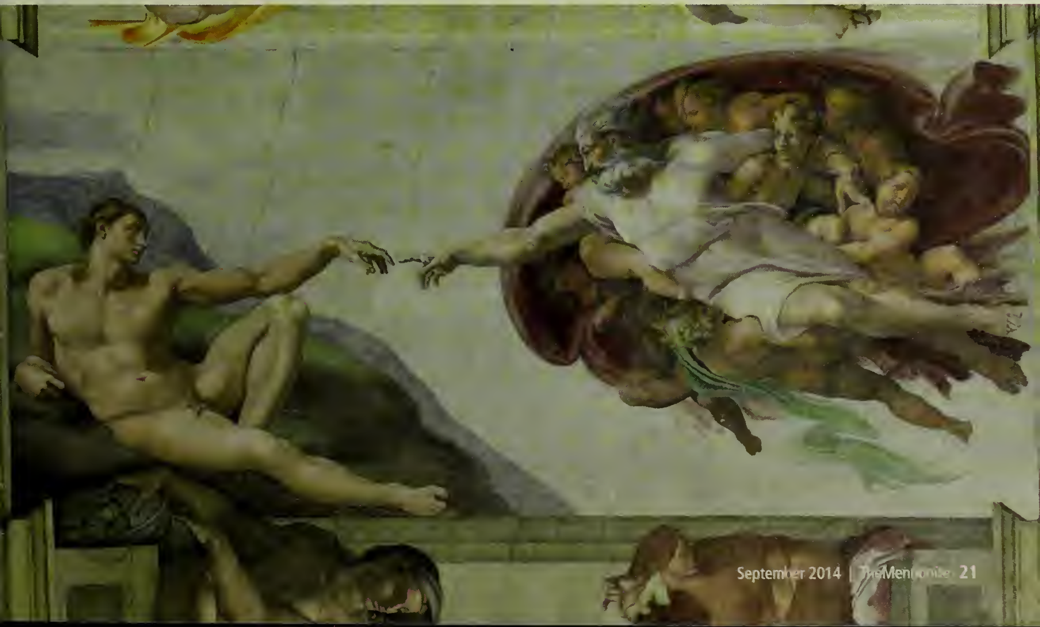
Paul Born is a community activist and author of Deepening Community: Finding Joy Together in Chaotic Times *(Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2014). This article is adapted from an article that appeared in* Canadian Mennonite. *Learn more at www.deepeningcommunity.org.*

Creativity as holy work

In creativity we express ourselves as made in God's image.

by Ann Minter Fetters

No doubt, it was the highlight of my trip to Italy. Anyone who has seen it knows what I mean. The Creation of Adam, the central image in a long line of frescoes that grace the narrow ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo's portrayal of the Creator's finger reaching out to touch the finger of humanity is one I keep returning to, even some 20 years later. It is, for me, one of the most powerful images of God. In it I see that we are not only lovingly created but that our own creative acts are an extension of that love. In the midst of those acts we emulate the Creator. In this way, our creativity becomes holy work.



In our technologically advanced society, true creativity can seem far removed from everyday life. But creative expression is necessary for us to be fully human. It is what transforms us. Peter Korn, who is a master furniture maker in Maine, states in his book *Why We Make Things and Why It Matters*, "The banquet of work, leisure and consumption that society prescribes has left some essential part of us undernourished. We are hungry for avenues of engagement that provide more wholesome sustenance." He describes how the craft of furniture making can function as a source of meaning, authenticity and fulfillment for many people. "The same is true of other self-expressive, creative disciplines," he writes.

Of course, many people don't see themselves as creative or as what the world would consider to be artists. They believe that to be artistic means, for example, being adept at drawing or painting. But this definition limits the scope of what it means to create. A broader concept of creativity can be found, for instance, in the act of rebuilding an engine or in the disciplined training for a marathon. It is simply the process of tapping into our creative impulses and bringing them to life.

It is in the creation of something new that we experience the divine.

The energizing act of creativity has more recently resonated with me since I've started writing fiction. In my own career of teaching college English, my writing has mainly been academic—first, learning it, then teaching it and doing it. Likewise, my work as a free-lance writer has been journalistic. While both of these involve a process of articulating ideas onto paper, that process is primarily left-brain work, structured and prescribed. Though this kind of writing was meaningful for me, after about two hours of doing it, my head would hurt, and I found myself glancing at the clock. I was desperate to take a break.

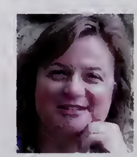
As my writing became more creative, however, I discovered something interesting. My imagination ran free. I was thoroughly absorbed in what I was doing. I lost all track of time. This was right-brain activity, and it came from my soul. I was, indeed, bringing something new to life.

The same can be said about rebuilding an engine. Mathew B. Crawford, in his book *Shopclass as Soulcraft*, writes about his experience as a mechanic. "Seeing a motorcycle about to leave my shop under its own power, several days after arriving in the back of a pickup truck, I suddenly don't feel tired, even though I've been standing or a concrete floor all day. The owner hops on his newly repaired bike, and as he revs the engine, that sound pleases me, as I know it does him. The wad of cash in my pocket feels different from the paycheck I earn in my office job."

How, then, is such work holy? In my fiction, I don't necessarily write on "Christian" topics. I might use the name of Jesus in my stories; I might not. But if my work is the best I can deliver if it expresses truth and beauty in their own right then I believe it is pleasing to God.

So, too, running a marathon can be a godly pursuit. The 1981 film *Chariots of Fire* tells the true story of Eric Liddell, a British athlete training for the Olympics. He possessed a strong faith, and hi running was an expression of his spirituality. "I believe God made me for a purpose," he said. "He also made me fast. And when I run, I feel his pleasure."

It comes down to this: It is in the creation of something new that we experience the divine. And what of Michelangelo? Did he have a spiritua awakening when he painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel? One can only wonder, but it's hard to imagine, as his wet brush touched the plaster surface, that he didn't understand that what he was doing was, in fact, holy.



Ann Minter Fetters is a member of Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita, Kan.

Ducks and thugs and tractor trailers

Bringing God's message of peace into the classroom

by Shirley Kurtz

For a brief, happy spell, I had a tutoring job at our public elementary school down the road. Reading, writing and doing math with 20 third graders, I could bore my ideas into their little sponge minds. Even after a statewide funding cut eliminated the tutoring program, the regular teacher let me come back to help out.

Best of all was the deal with the bumper sticker.

We'd read a pair of stories I'd brought from home. In the one, Elizabeth Fry, a Quaker social reformer in England in the early 1900s, returns one evening to her upstairs room at the inn where she's staying and stops short in the doorway. Something is wrong. Her candle has gotten knocked to the floor. A dresser drawer is hanging open. Then she spots a man's boot protruding from underneath her bed.

Elizabeth takes time to collect her wits. She then moves to the bed, kneels down beside the boot and starts praying out loud for the thief.

The man who crawls out is ragged and undernourished. He's terrified that Elizabeth will call the police and he'll get sent back to jail. Instead, Elizabeth gives him her husband's sweater. She takes him down to supper. She gets him to divulge his seamy past. Together, she and he talk about how he might find a job.

In the other story, set in 1700s Switzerland, old Preacher Peter wakens in the night to noises on his roof. He steals outside to discover men tearing down his thatch. Realizing these are some of the village folks who've been angered by his church's opposition to war, Peter goes back inside and asks his wife to fix the workmen supper.

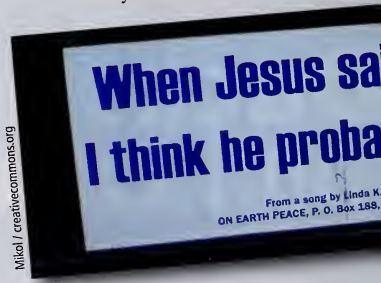
I announced that anybody who memorized—repeated to me—the bumper-sticker slogan on my car would be allowed to pick a prize out of my junk box.

He invites the men in, gets them around the table, offers a prayer. But they can't eat the food on their plates. They push back their chairs and flee the room. Soon they're back on Peter's roof, repairing it. Then away they sneak, into the night.

Obviously, with these stories I meant to plant otherworldly notions. As I pointed out to the children, neither of our heroes had a gun stashed under the pillow. To clinch things, I announced that anybody who memorized—repeated to me—the bumper-sticker slogan on my car would be allowed to pick a prize out of my junk box.

Due to the layout of the parking lot, I couldn't park close enough to my classroom. The distance made the words too hard to decipher. So I had to haul my husband's binoculars to school. And because the above-the-radiator window sat too high for some of the children, they resorted to climbing a chair to peer out.

Perched on her knees atop the radiator, the back pockets of her jeans ablaze with silver-studded bows, tiny, fluffy-haired Sadie tried to hold the binoculars steady. "When Jesus, said—" Those first words were readable. "When Jesus said, 'Love, your—'" But that next word was a stickler. It was too drawn-out and blurry. It took pained squinting.



Mikol / creativecommons.org

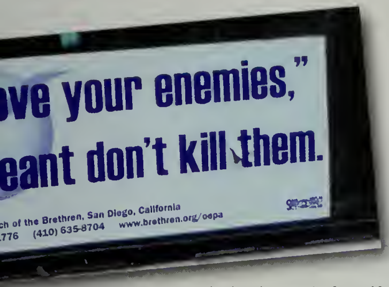
I had the children copy down the line on scrap paper. They had to do the quotation marks. They had to spell properly. "When J-e-s-u-s said ..."

Benny (not his real name) didn't need a chair, though. He was the one I really wanted to get to. Sleepy eyed, camouflage jacketed, in love with maps and historical facts, he'd told me about his plans to join the military. Sometimes in class (we'd be working on, say, his times sixes: 6 x 6=36, 7 x 6=42, 8 x 6=48), he collapsed into hopelessness. "I can't do it, I can't get it," he groaned. On one occasion I got him to yell out to the parking lot, "I can't do it, I can't get it, I'm stupid." Now the useless thoughts were gone from his head. They'd flown out the window. He seemed tickled—temporarily.

Benny's choice of junk prize, after he memorized the bumper-sticker quote, was the stuffed tiger, or maybe it was a leopard. "When Jesus said, 'Love your enemies,' " recited Benny, concentrating hard, "I think he probably meant don't kill them."

Another child picked out the zebra (or panda—whatever). Konner took off with an old tie of my husband's. Katlyn chose a tie, too. The plastic lizards went, and the turtles. The fake candle. The poker cards. The clock. The jump rope. Ethan went for the scuffed knee guards. He sauntered off to his next class with the purple Velcro straps wound around his pant legs.

You may be wondering why I never got into trouble. Actually, teachers in the public school system are expected to promote diversity. So if children aren't learning about minorities who hew to odd convictions, that's an omission in need of rectifying. When I taught at the high school I showed the movie *Gandhi*. I had my juniors and seniors in English class watch a selection from *Soldiers Speak Out*, about the antiwar movement within the U.S. military. Maybe some of the poetry and other literature-textbook selections I'd taught earlier in the semester—the potent, raw evocations of war's hideousness—had created in my students' minds revulsion enough to validate the conscientious-objector mind-set. Think John Hersey's *Hiroshima*. Think "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner" by Randall Jarrell (www.rjgeib.com/thoughts/gunner/gunner.html). Think "Dulce et Decorum Est" by Wilfred Owen (www.rjgeib.com/heroes/owen/owen.html).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eant don't kill them.
ch of the Brethren, San Diego, California
776 (410) 635-8704 www.brethren.org/oepa

At the high school, U.S. Army recruiters are permitted to set up their displays near the gym or cafeteria, in the hall. They can't sign up students on school property, but they can pal around with the kids and spin alluring stories about travel and adventure. Occasionally they even bring their monstrous, jazzily painted tractor trailer and leave it like a brown steel death trap at the far edge of the lot designated for student cars.

One week, my husband says, the principal's voice came over the intercom announcing that teachers, if they wanted, could take their classes out to the truck in the parking lot to see the weapons simulators. "May we go?" asked the ninth graders in my husband's class. "Absolutely not," he yelped. "We need fewer people wanting to kill, not more."

The students, he says, shushed up fast. (To learn more about these specially outfitted semis, go here: http://www.usarec.army.mil/MSBn/Documents/MSBN_USER_Guide.pdf)

A third story I took to the elementary school for my third graders, Roald Dahl's *The Magic Finger*, wasn't expressly Christian or about loving your enemies exactly. The girl puts a curse on the family next door, avid hunters, when they come trooping joyously home with another deer carcass tied upside down by the hooves. She hates how they kill for the fun of it.

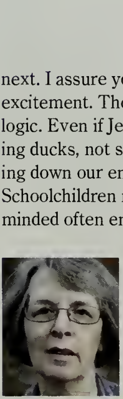
So when they go out hunting again and mow down 16 ducks, the curse kicks in. Four more ducks fly over—but the shooters keep missing. Weird.

Next morning the family members wake up to discover they've shrunk. They've grown duck wings in place of arms. The family flaps out the window and into the sky, and four oversized ducks with arms instead of wings move into the house. The family spends the day building a nest in a high tree, where they huddle miserably the whole livelong night.

In the morning, they find themselves staring down into the barrels of their own guns. No, no, the people screech, don't shoot. Why not? ask the ducks. Weren't you always shooting at us?

You'll have to find out for yourself what happens next. I assure you, the third graders writhed in excitement. They got it—the unimpeachable logic. Even if Jesus never said anything about loving ducks, not shooting makes sense—not bringing down our enemies by harming them. Schoolchildren need to know this. I can't be reminded often enough. Some stories more than others tell the truth.

'May we go?' asked the ninth graders in my husband's class. 'Absolutely not,' he yelped. 'We need fewer people wanting to kill, not more.'



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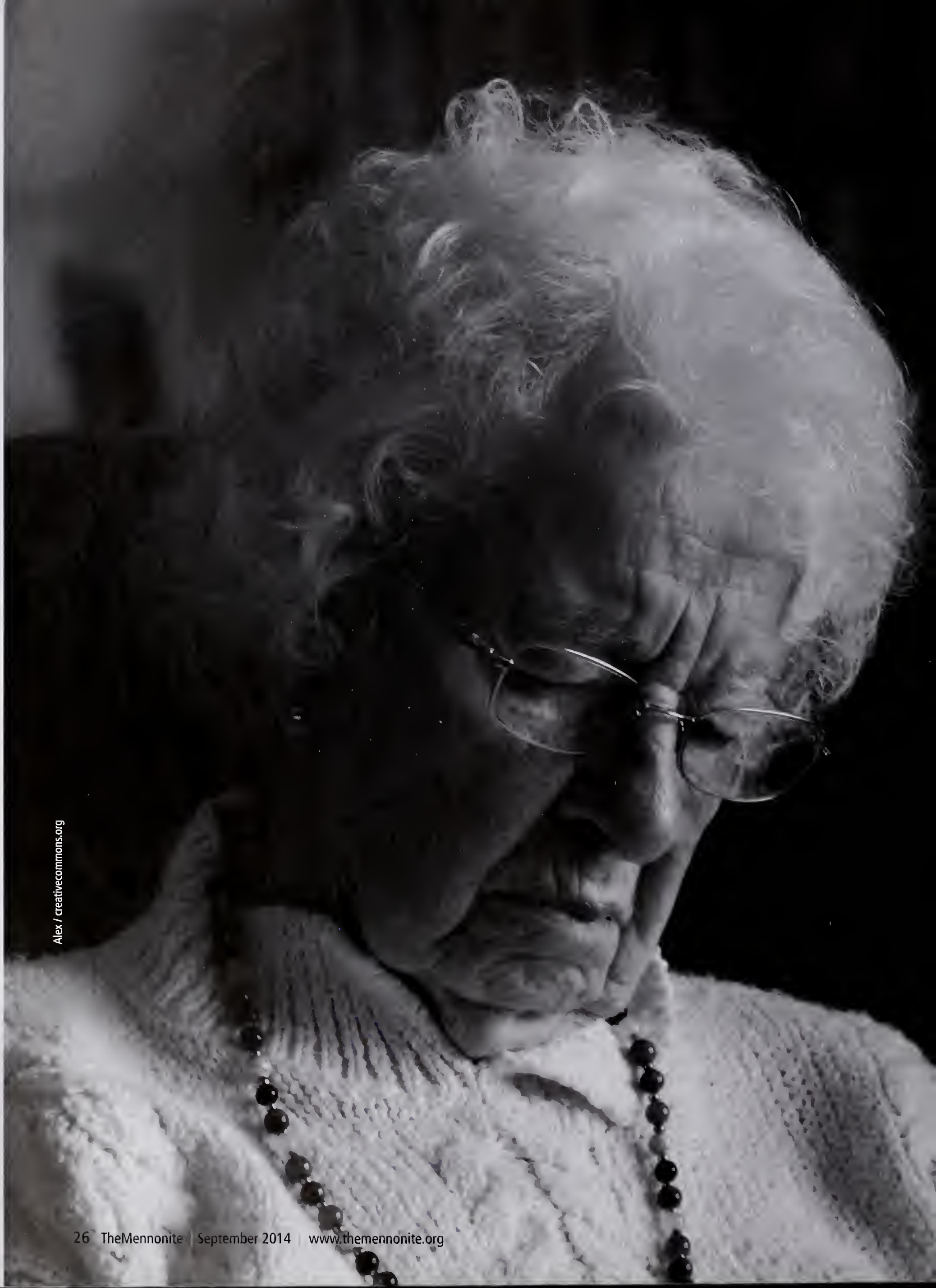

Alex / creativecommons.org

Psalm 139

paraphrased for victims of dementia

by Nancy S. Kaufman

O God, I am lost in a cloud of my mind, but you understand my thoughts buried within me.
When I wander, pace without direction, and can't control what my body does,
You know my heart, my inner core, who I really am.
Though I cannot communicate with words,
You know all I want to say.
I am yearning, searching to find myself, some way to connect; I want to ask, "Do you know me?"
God replies with a quiet comfort, reassuring, "I know you."
I am frantic! I am lost! I search all hours of the day!
You are always with me, beside me, a calm presence in my chaos.
Once in a while I can clear through the fog and make a connection, other times hopelessly lost.
At times, I feel no one can possibly love me; I am too buried in my disease.
I am in complete darkness, alone.
But there you are, sitting beside me.
I remember now—you were there when I was a child, held in my mother's arms.
So much promise and love.
You were the one who made me—I was perfect, whole and free.
I took all of that for granted.
Even when the disease began to seep and overtake my mind,
You still loved me, in spite of all you knew ahead in my life's journey, so unfathomable to me.
You still traveled with me in my walk.
My whole being wants to explode with how you care and love me.
Your presence within even me. This can't be measured.
No matter what I do outwardly, you are within my core that can't be touched by the disease.
Why can't I be free from the chains of my mind?
This disease overwhelms me!
This is not the path I chose.
But then my mind comes back to you. In my weariness.
Having you here beside me, within me. This is all that matters.
I am still.

Nancy S. Kaufman is a member of Trinity Mennonite Church in Hillsboro, Kan. She says she wrote this while working with hospice patients.

A community of character

Jesus calls us to be servants of one another.

by Earl Sears

The blind see while the sighted do not. Insiders are outsiders. Outsiders are insiders.

In Mark 10: 35-45, Jesus' disciples assert a bold request for power. They demand due for sacrifices they made in choosing to follow Jesus. They say, "Grant one of us to sit at your right hand and one at your left hand in your glory." We shouldn't be too critical or judgmental; we might well have asked for the same. After all, these disciples left careers and homes to follow Jesus. They sought roles equivalent to Prime Minister and Secretary of State. Any responsib liberation movement would have allotted this right; it is the wisdom of power.

Jesus responds with supreme irony. He asks them, "Can you drink of the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" The di ciples jump up and down shouting, "Yes, yes!" and wonder what they were finall going to get. Jesus says, "You will indeed share my cup, but the intention you seek is not mine to give. You have not yet understood my kind of kingdom."

In fact, what these disciples get is the opposite of what they expect. They des

James Kraybill

Often those with little know instinctively the wisdom of generosity. They understand this wisdom far beyond what we with relative wealth know.

pomp and circumstance and royalty like the Herodian Temple in the walls of Jerusalem. Instead, they survive as servants working in the streets for the early church. They endure persecution and disrespect. Indeed, the final image of the "right and left hand of Jesus" turns out to be two thieves, each nailed to his own cross.

We must notice that blind healing stories frame this central section of Mark. The blind see while the sighted do not. Insiders are outsiders. Outsiders are insiders. Here, conflict arises between Jesus and his disciples, who resist the call to humility he preaches and lives.

In contrast, the later text of Hebrews, written between 60 and 90 A.D., shows understanding of Jesus' call for servanthood. We know the writers of this later text had a contemporary model in Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6), a well-known priest figure who served his people with humility. So what happened in the interim between the writer of Mark and the writer of Hebrews that created this radically different understanding among Jesus' followers? That event we call Jesus' death and his Resurrection. We know the truth of Jesus' kingdom when we recognize that Resurrection comes after humiliation and death.

When the disciples dreamed of power and privilege, they were able to hear in Jesus' teachings only what they wanted to hear. Most of us do this until some event causes us to see in a new way. Pastor Richard Michael (*Christian Century*, October 2011) in his first sermon after 9-11-01 stated, "We are now seen by the world as having joined the ranks of those who know poverty. We ... a people of great wealth and resources, for a moment have opportunity to join Lazarus in a beggar's view of the world ... here we can learn about value and priorities, it is the wisdom of the poor ... perhaps we can change our prayers from 'God bless America' to 'God make America a blessing to the nations.'"

Subsequent events proved that this country could not sustain so radical a vision. Our leadership continuously refuses to even consider such wisdom. But we, the church, are compelled to heed Jesus' call to create a community of character. We ought to live as a reminder of what Richard Michael calls "the wisdom of the poor."

So, like the writer of Hebrews, who looked to Melchizedek, for example, where do I look to understand this wisdom?

In 1962, my wife and I spent time in Puerto Rico. Here, we got a small introduction to this wisdom. Late one Sunday evening, after a worship service, we were taken to Coamo Ribba by jeep on a horse trail over the hills. We came to a wooden house built precariously on stilts with a small outdoor kitchen. At 9 p.m., we were served a meal of arroz con pollo, a relatively rich expense for this family. But they wanted to offer this generosity to their guests from the north.

Many times since, my wife and I have directly experienced such acts of generosity from the poor. I am not talking about those living in abject poverty, neither am I advocating for abject poverty, but often those with little know instinctively the wisdom of generosity. They understand this wisdom far beyond what we with relative wealth know. Statistics are consistent. When incomes are higher, the percentage of that income given to charitable causes is lower.

People who are not wealthy are often aware of their dependence on each other. People who are not wealthy are often aware that everything and every action is a gift from the divine.

We who are not poor need to repent our proud illusion of self-sufficiency. To live as a community of character is to remember that truth Jesus offered to his disciples on that day they asked for privilege: "Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve"(Mark 10:43-45).

That the last are first and the first are last—this truth we still find hard to understand. This truth challenges our modern society. This truth teaches us how those who live in a shabby wooden house on stilts can lead us toward the richness of a life lived in loving and generous humility.

Earl Sears is a member of the Mennonite Congregation of Boston. This article is adapted from a sermon he gave there.

Discipling the disinterested

Aaron Kaufman is president of Virginia Mennonite Missions.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.—Jesus

It's time for us to invest at least as much energy in making disciples next door as we do around the world.

Mennonite World Conference membership grew by almost a third in the past decade, from 1.3 million in 2003 to nearly 1.8 million today. There are more Anabaptists in Africa than in North America, more in Latin America than in Europe. Meanwhile, membership in Mennonite Church USA continues to drop. Over the past dozen years, we have lost nearly 1 in 5 of our members.

Clearly we have some work to do.

But what if our next-door neighbors—or even our own children—don't want to be discipled? What if they find laughable the claim that Jesus is Lord or inconceivable the way of life he invites us to live? How do we disciple the disinterested?

Perhaps the place to start is with **building a bridge of trust**. Many people today distrust Christians and the church, and rightly so. Too many of us look too little like Jesus.

According to Dave Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons in their book *UnChristian* (Baker, 2007) a majority of non-Christians view Christianity as too political, old-fashioned, hypocritical, judgmental and anti-homosexual.

What if rather than defending ourselves when criticized, we simply said, "I'm sorry"? Or imagine if we all refused to argue with or avoid our antagonists and committed ourselves to bless and pray for them instead.

Let's treat our non-Christian neighbors the way we do our brothers and sisters in Christ.

A second way to draw people to discipleship is to **live a life that evokes curiosity**. Not everyone is as closed to Jesus and the church as statistics indicate. Our uncommon actions and attitudes can pique their interest.

Evoking curiosity used to be easy when Mennonites wore distinctive dress. But how often has distinctive dress pointed people to the Lord? External identity markers tend to isolate us in a Christian subculture rather than invite thoughtful questions about who we are and why.

As assimilated Mennonites, we have the opportunity to be different in the things that matter.

A while back, when our next-door neighbor's father passed away, Laura, my wife, and I did wha anyone at our church would have done for us. We asked them if we could bring them a meal. "Sure," they said, looking both surprised and touched. "That would be great." We set a date, and Laura baked chicken and pumpkin pie. For weeks afterward, they thanked us for that small gesture of care.

A third way to relate to those who have been inoculated against the gospel is to **ask question rather than rush to give answers**. And by questions, I don't mean, "If you die tonight, where will you spend eternity?"

I'm referring to the kinds of questions Jesus himself asked. The Gospels record at least 25 times when people ask Jesus direct questions requiring a simple answer. He only gives straight answers to four. The other 21? Jesus responds with questions of his own, such as:

- What do you want me to do for you? (Matthew 20:32)
- What is written in the law? How do you read it? (Luke 10:26)

Genuine questions can disarm people and activate conversations of the heart.

While serving in Colombia as mission workers some years ago, we met a man named Pachito at church one evening. It was his first time there since childhood. Not realizing what I was getting into, I invited him to come by our house any time he wanted to talk.

To my surprise, the next evening we heard a knock at our gate. It was Pachito. His first words were, "Does God really speak to people?"

"Let's go for a walk," I said. I asked him to share what was on his mind. He spoke of his love of art and music, of his memories attending church as a boy. Eventually, he opened up about his struggles with substance abuse and unhealth unfaithful relationships.

I felt prompted to say, "You may have been unfaithful, but God has never stopped being faithful. He can change your life if you're willing to let him. But it won't be easy."

A year later, I joined the local pastor, Jaime Guevara, in baptizing Pachito.

Here's a modest proposal for witness in our increasingly post-Christian culture. Let's treat our non-Christian neighbors the way we do our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Do women cause the church anxiety?

Cynthia Lapp is pastor of Hyattsville (Md.) Mennonite Church.

There is a lot of talk about the "catastrophe" in Mennonite Church USA brought on by Mountain States Mennonite Conference licensing Theda Good for ministry. Theda has an M.Div. from Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va., is gifted for ministry and happens to be married to another woman. But what if Theda is just the latest woman to make the church uncomfortable? Perhaps the current "crisis" reveals that as a church we have not yet settled the question that was labeled a threat decades ago, that of women in leadership and ministry.

We don't have to go back too far to read about other women in ministry who have been accused of creating trouble in the church. In the past few years, the Mennonite press has reported about women who have performed weddings or say they are open to performing ceremonies for same-sex couples.

Are male ministers not engaging in this kind of ministry?

Joanna Harader, Megan Ramer, myself and Joetta Handrich Schlabach had their credentials reviewed; Sheri Hostetler was twice sanctioned; Kathleen Temple had her credentials revoked.

Only one man in recent memory has been in the press and sanctioned for a similar action: Weldon Nisly. [Editor's note: Randall Spaulding, Michael Schaadt and Richard Lichty had their credentials revoked; Randall and Michael for being in a same-sex relationship and Richard because he was pastor when Germantown Mennonite Church was excommunicated.]

This is not an exhaustive list of either women or men who have officiated such ceremonies or had their credentials revoked, but one might ask why we do not read in the Mennonite press of more men participating in similar ceremonies? Are male ministers not engaging in this kind of ministry? Are they opting out for ecclesial or theological reasons? Do they decline out of fear for their position and status? Or have the powers that be decided not to make their actions public, to save face for everyone involved?

It could be that women in Mennonite Church USA have a different reading of the Bible or approach theology with a different lens and thus do ministry in ways that men do not. Or perhaps the experience of women in ministry in Mennonite Church USA continues to be so tenuous that to step across a perceived polity line is just one more of the many risks we must take to do our jobs.

We might make a few other observations. The women named above are pastors in urban areas or university towns, where their gifts for ministry are not the exception. These women have developed a leadership style that allows them to act with the backing of their local congregations even if not with the backing of their conferences.

Since they have the support of their local congregations, they are assured they will not lose their jobs. One might ask if they have made the assessment that there are few options as women in ministry. If mobility is limited, there is freedom to follow their understanding of Scripture and the leading of the Spirit.

The trajectory for women in Mennonite Church USA is still one that for the most part ends in the small, local congregation. (The Women in Leadership Project identified that in 2009 there were fewer women in leadership in the Mennonite church than there were 20 years earlier. And women were not moving into executive positions. A quick look at the Mennonite agencies makes it is easy to see that five years later there are still no women as executives of Mennonite agencies. It is not that there are not women in leadership in these agencies but that they are not the lead executives).

On the other hand, we now have two women leaders in elected but unpaid positions: Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, moderator of Mennonite Church USA, and Patricia Shelly, moderator-elect. Is this progress, or are Elizabeth and Patty called now to clean up the mess that has been created since the merger brought us Mennonite Church USA?

Perhaps it is naive to wonder if the anxiety would be roiling this much if it had been men that had taken the lead in performing same-sex ceremonies. But one wonders if Mennonite Church USA is still so captivated by patriarchy that when women dare step out in leadership they are put in their place by those who hold the power in the institution?

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

MWC Assembly 2015 to include scattered locations

Assembly Scattered will occur before and after the July 21-26, 2015, assembly.

Liesa Unger, chief international events officer for Mennonite World Conference says that "[MWC] Assemblies come with many parts. Two of them are Assembly Gathered and Assembly Scattered." Unger, who is from Regensburg, Germany, is overseeing the planning of Pennsylvania 2015, the next MWC Assembly, to be held in July 2015.

"Assembly Gathered will happen at one place—Harrisburg, Pa.—during one week, July 21-26, 2015," she says. "Assembly Scattered will take place at multiple sites, with some events before Assembly Gathered and some following."

Assembly Scattered first occurred as part of the MWC Assembly in Calcutta in January 1997. Because few Mennonites live in Calcutta, MWC leaders worked with churches throughout India and in other countries in Asia to host travelers on their way to or from Calcutta. Visitors experienced church life in communities across the region, and locals who weren't able to attend the Calcutta Assembly fellowshipped in their home communities with sisters and brothers from other parts of the world who were traveling to or from the Assembly.

"Many of the Assembly Scattered sites for Pennsylvania 2015 also include visits to nearby historical or cultural land marks. Hosts will introduce their guests to places and activ ties they've read about. But this is more than tourism. By experiencing each other's settings, we learn to know each other better," says Unger.

Assembly Scattered will take place in more than 10 com munities during July 2015.

"This opportunity for fellowship flows both ways," says Unger. "Visitors learn about day-to-day life in the United States and Canada while also worshipping in Anabaptist-re lated congregations. And locals are enriched by opening their homes and churches to 'family' they would otherwise not have known. This is how lifelong relationships become real."

Details about Assembly Scattered are available on the registration form for PA 2015 at www.mwc-cmm.org/pa201
—*Phyllis Pellman Good for Mennonite World Conference*

Assembly Scattered opportunities

Before Assembly Gathered: Pennsylvania locations

1. "Mennonites of Lancaster County, Pa." Visit several Mennonite congregations, dating from the 1700s, which are alive and well in beautiful Lancaster County. Hear their joys and challenges; worship and fellowship with them. Learn about early Mennonite interaction with Native Americans. Tour the oldest home in Lancaster County (www.hansherr.org/home/herrhouse). Visit a farm operated by Amish and a modern farm operated by Mennonites. Become acquainted with Eastern Mennonite Missions in western Lancaster County. From 9:30 a.m., July 18, through the morning of July 21.

2. "Mennonite Farms of Lancaster County, Pa." Visit some of the farms owned for generations by families who are members of the 300-year-old Mellinger Mennonite Church. Learn about modern farm operations in North America. Why do young people choose farming? Enjoy worship, fellowship and recreation with the congregation on Sunday. From 8 a.m., July 17, through 7:30 p.m., July 20.

3. "Fun and Fellowship with Pittsburgh Mennonite Church." Discover this urban, multigenerational church's efforts in environmental stewardship and sustainability, fellowship, peace and justice. Learn the steel-industry beginnings of the "City of Bridges" and its rising economy in technology and education. From the evening of July 17 through the morning of July 20.

4. "Anabaptist Welcome and Witness in Philadelphia Sin 1683." Beginning in 1683, Philadelphia was the primary po of entry for Mennonite immigrants. Today, 332 years later, 28 Anabaptist congregations in greater Philly worship in nine languages. Join multicultural worship with testimonie of how God is at work in the city. Experience three urban ministry sites. Visit historical sites in one of the United States' oldest cities. From noon, July 17, through the evening of July 19.

5."Living Discipleship in Community." Visit one of two Bruderhof communities in Pennsylvania: Spring Valley or New Meadow Run. Join in community gardening, work pro ects, meals, games, outdoor activities and campfire fellowship. From 11 a.m., July 17, through noon on July 19.

Before Assembly Gathered: Eastern U.S. locations

6. "Mennonites, Monuments and African-American History in Washington, D.C." Take guided and interpreted wal ing tours of national monuments (focusing on peace monuments, among them Martin Luther King Jr.'s) and of Georgetown (focusing on African-American history). Includes attending area Mennonite congregations. From mor

ing, July 17, through evening, July 19.

7. "Diverse Anabaptist Communities in Miami Metro Area." Experience Miami and Dade County, Fla., home to 50 Brethren in Christ congregations, 10 Mennonite and three Amor Viviente fellowships, with members from Hispanic, Haitian, Anglo, Garifuna and other cultural groups. An introduction to immigration realities through testimonies of immigrants and those who offer assistance. Join in spirited worship and fellowship. From July 17, through July 20.

8. "Join North Carolina's Six Historic African-American and One Hispanic Mennonite Brethren Congregations for a Weekend of Worship, Music and Inspiration." Learn how the only MB congregations in the eastern United States began during segregation in the South and about their vibrant ministry today in the mountain communities of eastern North Carolina. Enjoy fellowship on the evening of July 17, a visit to the churches and their ministries on July 18 and a final worship service ending at noon, July 19.

9. "Living Discipleship in Community." Visit one of two Bruderhof communities in New York: Foxhill or Bellvale. Join in community gardening, work projects, meals, games, outdoor activities and campfire fellowship. From 11 a.m., July 17, through noon on July 19.

Before Assembly Gathered: North American locations

10. "DOOR San Antonio (Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection) in Partnership with San Antonio Mennonite Church, Texas." Hear from locals about immigration. Witness life at the U.S.-Mexican border. Volunteer with nonprofit agencies in San Antonio. From July 17 through July 19.

11. "Mennonite, Mennonite Brethren and Brethren in Christ Churches in the Pacific Region." Experience the diversity of MWC-related churches—Indonesian, Latino, Nigerian, Congolese and Korean—while interacting with church members and visiting outreach ministries and church institutions in Fresno, Los Angeles County and San Bernardino/Riverside counties in California. From July 16 through July 20.

12. "Walking with God in the City and the Wilderness: Anchorage, Alaska." Fellowship with members of Prince of Peace Mennonite Church (the northernmost Mennonite church in the world), visit ministry locations of the voluntary service unit, engage Alaska's Native cultures and hike and sightsee in the wilderness. From early July 16 through late July 20.

13. "Participate in the 105th annual conference of Conservative Mennonite Conference (CMC) in Hartville Ohio." Our theme will be "Step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). You're welcome to join with representatives from over 100 North American CMC churches in worship, workshops, discussion and fellowship. Begins the evening of July 16 and concludes at noon on July 19.

After Assembly Gathered locations

14. "Two Kingdoms, Two Loyalties: Anabaptist Engagement with Government in the U.S. Capital." Visit and converse with various Anabaptist-related advocacy offices in Washington, D.C. From morning, July 27, through evening, July 29, or morning, July 30.

15. "DOOR San Antonio (Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection) in Partnership with San Antonio Mennonite Church, Texas." Hear from locals about immigration. Witness life at the U.S.-Mexican border. Volunteer with nonprofit agencies in San Antonio. From July 27 through July 29.

Pending Assembly Scattered location

16. New York. Visit with members of the Anabaptist-related Garifuna-, Spanish- and English-speaking churches in at least three of New York City's boroughs.

Local tours add to PA 2015 experience

Registrants for PA 2015 will be able to choose from 47 tours while attending the Mennonite World Conference Assembly, to be held July 21-26, 2015, in Harrisburg, Pa.

Ten full-day tours will take place on July 20. Registrants may choose among visits to Washington, Philadelphia, New York City and several Anabaptist communities in eastern Pa. One of these is a full day in Lancaster County, where participants will meet with Old Order Amish and Mennonites, have dinner in an Amish home, and join in an evening singing with four Old Order groups.

Areas of focus for half-day tours offered during the Assembly include local historical sites of Mennonite-related groups, activities and locations of current-day Anabaptists, U.S. history, general interest and general interest/family friendly.

Among the destinations of these 37 half-day tours are active, nonfarming Amish businesses; Native American village sites, as well as the Lancaster Longhouse of the eastern woodland Indians; Underground Railroad locations of 1800-1860, used to help enslaved African Americans; and the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, designed to assimilate Native American children from 140 tribes into the United States' majority culture (1879-1918).

Other tours will visit a used Old Order Mennonite meetinghouse and an active buggy and carriage shop, the Ephrata Cloister where the *Martyrs Mirror* was first published in German and a greenhouse employing guest workers from Mexico, the Spanish-speaking Brethren in Christ congregation where many of them worship and stories from the workers.

There will be walking tours of historic downtown Lancaster and the nearby town of Strasburg, kayaking on the Susquehanna River and hiking the Appalachian Trail.

Details are available on the registration form for PA 2015 at www.mwc-cmm.org/pa2015.—*Phyllis Pellman Good*

MCC helps provide needed supplies in Gaza and Iraq

MCC works with its partners to provide relief in the war-torn region.

Photo courtesy of Al Najd Development Forum

A Gazan man who just had received two mattresses from Mennonite Central Committee's partner Al Najd Development Forum talks with others who gathered at Al Najd's office for MCC-supported supplies in late July. The people were displaced from their homes as a result of the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) through one of its longtime partners in Gaza, Al Najd Development Forum, provided emergency bedding supplies to about 2,000 displaced people, or 150 households, in east and north Gaza in late July.

The $35,000 project included items such as mattresses, sheets, pillows and plastic mats.

By the fifth week of the most recent Hamas-Israel conflict, BBC reported that the Palestinian death toll had risen above 1,900, the majority civilians. More than 60 Israelis, most of them soldiers, have died.

Earlier in July, MCC and Al Najd completed a $25,000 food distribution of locally purchased items to 230 families in Gaza. MCC is assessing a potential further food response.

Additional needs abound in Gaza, according to a July 23 report from the U.N.'s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Among these are water and sanitation services. Six sewage pumping stations and 15 wells are not operating, meaning that 1.2 million people, more than two-thirds the population of Gaza, have limited or no access to water and sanitation.

Al Najd is a community-based organization begun by women to provide services for women and their families.

"MCC continues to communicate daily with MCC partner Al Najd in Gaza," says Joanna Hiebert Bergen, a representative for MCC Palestine and Israel. "They are exhausted yet work tirelessly to get food and supplies out to families who have had their homes and livelihoods destroyed and often are grieving the loss of relatives as well. ... The situation absolutely desperate. Yet all of MCC's partner connections continue to work to assist those most affected." Hiebert Bergen and her spouse, Dan Bergen, also an MCC represe tative, are from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

In July, MCC joined 33 other organizations in calling fo "a ceasefire and sustained solution towards peace." The statement and signatories can be found at mcc.org/callforceasefire.

MCC and its partner organizations continue to mee needs of families displaced by conflict in Iraq with a mid-J distribution of locally purchased food and personal hygien items. Supplies in Garmawa Camp in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq were running low when MCC and partner Zakho Small Villages Project arrived with food packages i two large trucks.

The packages of rice, lentils, oil and other cooking staples, plus basic personal hygiene items such as soap, were given to more than 230 families living in the camp. They h been driven from the city of Mosul by the militant group t now calls itself Islamic State.

In June, MCC and another partner in Iraq, Al Amal, distributed food and other vital items to internally displaced persons living with family members and friends in a nearb province. Most IDPs in northern Iraq are with host familie but camps like Garmawa, established by the United Natio are beginning to be set up.—*Ed Nyce of MCC*

Fourteen-year-old Yusuf Yahiat carries a food package distribute by MCC partner Zakho Small Villages Project at the Garmawa Camp for displaced people in northern Iraq. Like most people liv in the camp, Yusuf and his family fled the city of Mosul after its takeover by the militant group that now calls itself Islamic State

MCC urges compassion for Central American migrants

MCC has committed an initial $30,000 to respond to the crisis.

With an unprecedented number of Central American families fleeing violence and poverty in their home countries and arriving at the U.S. border, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has committed $30,000 to an initial response and is assessing other potential assistance.

"Our call to welcome the stranger is bigger than ever," stresses MCC U.S. immigration education coordinator Saulo Padilla, adding that in his six years in the position he has never witnessed as many women and children at the border as he has in recent trips.

In visiting at centers serving those who have been deported into Mexico, meeting people at bus stops on both sides of the border and interacting with Mennonite churches who are caring for these immigrants in their own communities, he finds himself thinking of Matthew 18, especially verse 5: "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me."

MCC staff is working on details of this response, and more information is coming on these plans. Donations of money are welcome at donate.mcc.org/migrants, by calling 888-563-4676, or by sending donations to MCC U.S., 21 South 12th Street, Akron, PA 17501, specifying "Central American migrants."

This is a continuation of long-standing MCC work. For years MCC has provided encouragement and resources to congregations to welcome newcomers to the United States, worked with Anabaptist churches to provide services for immigrants in the United States and supported projects to address the root causes of migration in Mexico and Central America so more people can choose not to leave home.

Our call to welcome the stranger is bigger than ever.—Saul Padilla

MCC invites you to pray for these families and to consider how you can advocate on their behalf. Go to mcc.org/act-for-migrant-families to see an MCC U.S. Washington Office action alert with more background information, a faith reflection and suggestions for action.—*Ed Nyce of Mennonite Central Committee*

Revised polity manual now available

The manual remains a working document until delegate body affirms it

A newly revised polity manual, *A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership: Polity Manual for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA*, has been released as a working document. It is a joint effort of the two denominations.

The manual builds upon a previous resource, *A Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership*, that was written almost 20 years ago prior to the transformation process that established the two denominations.

In June, the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board named this resource as one of the foundational documents to guide Mennonite Church USA during this time of discernment surrounding the LGBT issue.

The revised polity manual seeks to create a common understanding of how leadership is a service to the local congregations, area conferences and the wider denominations.

A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership remains a working document until it is affirmed by the delegate body at the Mennonite Church USA convention in 2015 in Kansas City, Mo. Mennonite Church Canada's Christian Formation Council has already given approval of the manual, and it was taken to the Mennonite Church Canada Spring Leadership Assembly this year.

Denominational ministers Karen Martens Zimmerly (MC Canada), Terry Shue and Nancy Kauffmann (both MC USA) coordinated the revision process. They listened to pastors, area church/conference ministers and other current and former church leaders for input and review.

Feedback helped shape the final product, which is based on the realities of ministry experiences.

The introduction states, "The revisions in this book are a way of naming the missional church we understand God is calling us to become."

Updates include a revised ethics section, clarification on managing credentials, best practices for resigned or retired pastors, and clarifying the work and relationships among area conferences, among others.

It is available at the MennoMedia store, www.mennomedia.org, or by calling 800-245-7894 (U.S.) or 800-631-6535 (Canada).—*MennoMedia staff*

Mennonite center creates international peacemakers

Hyun Hur, Sue Park-Hur open space for conversations among Korean immigrant

John Roth

Hyun Hur, Su Park-Hur, with daughter Lynn Hur (standing) and sons Yul Hur and Guhn Hur (at table), are co-directors of the ReconciliAsian peace center in Los Angeles.

The ReconciliAsian peace center brings peace and reconciliation training to the Korean-American community in Los Angeles.

Co-directors Hyun Hur and Sue Park-Hur, who launched the center in January 2013, say that the tools of peace and conflict transformation are gifts the Mennonite church can offer other denominations. The Hurs attend Mountain View Mennonite Church in Upland, Calif., where they were installed as co-pastors in January.

More than 600 people have participated in programs organized by ReconciliAsian over the past year and a half of the peace center's existence. The couple has coordinated day-long seminars, month-long discipleship workshops, shorter seminars and weekly book club meetings. Every session addresses peace and conflict transformation from a Mennonite perspective and offers practical guidance on healthy ways to navigate conflict and work for peace.

"One of our primary roles of reconciliation is to create a space for these types of conversations that you wouldn't normally talk about in the church," says Sue Park-Hur.

When they started ReconciliAsian, they were pastors for their house church, Church for Others, in Temple City, Calif., the only Korean Mennonite church on the West Coast, and the Hurs felt isolated from the other Korean churches in Los Angeles.

"We wanted to connect with other Korean churches," says Hyun Hur. "We tried to think about what gift the Mennonites bring to other Christians, and we saw that we coul build bridges through the peacemaking and conflict transfo mation work that Mennonites have done."

All churches deal with conflict, and the Hurs knew o many Korean immigrant churches that had struggled with disagreements and had split rather than work through issu

"Primarily, we want to help them know their new identi here as immigrants," says Sue Park-Hur. "When you're shaken up about who you are, you feel lost and like you ca do anything. We wanted to teach practical things like 'I' me sages and active listening skills, but we realized that to really touch the people and to reframe their understanding o conflict, we had to teach them Scripture and reframe their theology. We want them to see that their identity is to be a international peacemaker for God's kingdom."

Hyun Hur says they use scriptures such as 2 Corinthia 5:17-20, about God's ministry of reconciliation, and Ephesians 2, where Jesus reconciles Jews and Gentiles. These teach people that a Christian's mission on earth is to parti pate in Jesus' reconciling ministry.

Korean leaders from different Christian denominations are now helping lead ReconciliAsian sessions. The spring justice and peacemaking discipleship school was held at a Presbyterian church.

These leaders also seek out the couple for their special ization. In July, Hyun Hur led a conflict and church semina at Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, Calif., with 10 Korean pastors.

"Now [Korean pastors] see him as more than just a loca pastor but as a director of an organization that talks about conflict—and who doesn't have conflict?" says Sue Park-Hur. "Before, they never would have asked him to talk because he was a Mennonite, but now they see him as a resource person in this field and are more open to talk abo the struggles in their church and ask for help."

In July, the Hurs visited the Mennonite Church USA offices in Elkhart, Ind., to share about their ministry and to meet some Mennonite leaders. The tie to Mennonite agen cies started at the beginning of their ministry, when they connected with Hannah Heinzekehr, who then worked as a church relations associate for Mennonite Mission Networl

"I was impressed with how passionate they were about Jesus' call to peacemaking," says Heinzekehr, who is now rector of communication for Mennonite Church USA. "It was an opportunity for Mennonite Mission Network to sup port people who wanted to do mission in their community. They are genuine bridge-builders because they are so rela tional. They truly are mission workers in L.A."—*Sara Alvarez of Mennonite Mission Network*

Church members bond with Chinese youth

Youth and adults at Gehman Mennonite Church volunteer at English camp.

Members of Gehman Mennonite Church in Adamstown, Pa., and 15 Chinese youth began new friendships through an English camp, cross-cultural activities, and home stays provided by Gehman and other local congregations July 20-Aug. 2.

"I've been a classroom teacher for 32 years, and this English camp for Chinese students is at the top of my list of favorite teaching experiences," said teacher Bonnie Walls.

"We've been hosting Chinese students for eight years," said Mark Hannay, camp coordinator. "We were encouraged to begin by an Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) worker in China we've partnered with financially for many years. We had a positive experience the first year and have been doing it ever since."

The Chinese students met at the church every weekday morning for Bible stories and prayer with members of the church, followed by an English lesson. The students chose English names and learned English vocabulary and grammar. Youth from Gehman Mennonite volunteered as mentors for the Chinese students.

"We organize the lessons so that the students learn vocabulary words they can use," said Walls. Afternoons included miniature golf, horseback riding, amusement parks and seeing *Moses* at Sight and Sound Theatre in Ronks, Pa.

In addition to the camp experience, Hannay worked with a planning committee to ensure that students got the most out of their experience with host families.

"The Chinese students come from one-child families, so they don't have the experience of living with siblings," said Hannay. "For the most part we had just one student per host family. That way, in addition to being immersed in English, they also get a real sense of family life in the United States."

Hannay encouraged host families to keep their normal routines, including family meal times and devotions, so that the Chinese students could experience Christian family life.

Another aspect of Gehman Mennonite's ministry among Chinese people is annual trips to China during the Christmas season. "Gehman members connect with 'our' EMM worker in China and host Christmas parties in universities and schools," said Hannay. "Chinese students are very curious about Christmas, and in that context we can share the story of the birth of Christ."

Hannay emphasized that these exchanges are important for strengthening ongoing relationships with their Chinese friends. "One of the host families from two summers ago went to China on one of the Christmas teams, and while there they met the family of the student they hosted," said Hannay. "It was really encouraging to hear about the way they connected with each other."

Walls said several of the youth from the church who volunteered at this summer's English camp are considering joining the Christmas team in December.—*Chris Fretz of EMM*

Chris Fretz

Youth volunteers (from left to right) Rachel Musselman, Abby Horning and Hannah Gockley toss bags of ice cream ingredients back and forth to make "baggie ice cream" at the English camp for Chinese students hosted by Gehman Mennonite Church this summer.

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Students witness hope amid conflict in Palestine

Three Goshen College students spend the summer serving in Bethlehem.

Goshen photo

Goshen (Ind.) College students Kiernan Wright, a junior from Orrville, Ohio, Sam Carlson, a junior from Goshen, and Jessica Davila, a junior from Goshen, served at the Wi'am Conflict Resolution Center in Bethlehem this summer.

When Sam Carlson walked to work in the morning, he stepped over hundreds of tear gas canisters, stun grenades and smoke bombs. Sometimes, he could feel tear gas lingering in the air.

Carlson, a junior peace, justice and conflict studies (PJCS) major from Goshen, Ind., served at the Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center (Wi'am) in Bethlehem, Palestine, this summer. After making the decision to spend the summer in Palestine, he was accepted into Goshen College's Service Inquiry Program, which offers students the opportunity to serve with a church-related service or mission agency.

Carlson served in Bethlehem along with Jessica Davila, a junior from Goshen, and Kiernan Wright, a junior from Orrville, Ohio. Clare Maxwell, a 2013 graduate, also served alongside them until her return in June.

Bethlehem is in the West Bank, a territory to the east of Israel that is home to more than 2 million Palestinians. The West Bank is occupied by Israel and enclosed by a separation barrier that restricts Palestinian movement.

Although the region has been in the news a lot, the West Bank is separate from Gaza, a strip of land to the west of Israel, where there is heavy fighting between the Israeli army and Hamas.

Though Goshen College does not encourage students to visit dangerous locations, the students arrived during a period of relative calm between the two states, before tensions escalated in June.

Witnessing the conflict

Carlson, who lived in the heart of Bethlehem since the end of May, witnessed nonviolent protests broken up by te gas and stun grenades. He says the conflict became increa ingly violent during his time in the West Bank.

Carlson worked as a children's camp counselor at Wi'an which works to resolve disputes within the Palestinian cor munity through traditional Arab mediation as well as Western models of conflict resolution. During his first week at the summer camp, two days were cut short by nearby figh ing.

"The first day, there was loud gunfire on the street [nea the center," Carlson says. "The children were rushed into the building, seeking safety behind closed doors. The second occurrence came when a cloud of tear gas migrated over the center's facilities. Again, the children were rushe inside."

Tear gas completely debilitates a person, rendering them short of breath and without sight. It's a terrible, terrible feeling.—Sam Carlson

Like most Americans, Carlson had never encountered tear gas before.

"It completely debilitates a person, rendering them sho of breath and without sight," Carlson says. "It's a terrible, terrible feeling."

Davila says it was a transformative experience to see th frustration, pain and sadness the Palestinians experience a the conflict becomes increasingly violent.

"I think the most life-changing experience I had in Palestine was witnessing the occupation," she says. "I cannot help feeling a moral responsibility to try to do something about the horrible things I have witnessed."

Service in Palestine

Carlson decided to visit Palestine with the Service Inquiry Program in order to gain firsthand experience in two his passions: nonviolent social change and the Arabic language.

Carlson, Davila and Wright are among about a dozen Goshen students who came to Palestine in the last few sur mers at the encouragement of Marcelle Zoughbi, a 2013 Goshen graduate and a Christian from Bethlehem, whose f ther is founder and director at Wi'am.

Carlson and Wright worked at Wi'am's summer camp as children's counselors. This involved planning and facilitating daily activities, which included arts and crafts, singing, organized sports and dabkeh—a traditional Palestinian dance. When the camp was not in session, Carlson and Wright wrote grant proposals for Wi'am.

Davila volunteered at Le Crèche, a Christian orphanage, and served on the medical team at Caritas Baby Hospital, which provides medical assistance to about 35,000 children.

Lifelong lessons

Carlson says he learned a lot about the Israel-Palestine conflict, as well as trauma and recovery.

He expresses frustration with the U.S. role in the conflict and the amount of news that goes unreported. Walking down the street, he often sees tear gas canisters with labels that read "Made in Jamestown, Pa."

"The United States is providing billions of dollars of weapons to the Israeli military," Carlson says. "As an American, I feel partially responsible."

He feels like his privilege as an American citizen shaped many of his experiences in Palestine.

"If my safety is threatened, I have the option of fleeing home," he says. "My Palestinian community, however, cannot flee back to the comforts of their homes."

Carlson says it was difficult to see the people around him being denied basic rights.

"I hope to continue work with Palestine in whatever capacity I can," Carlson says.

Hope for the future

As Carlson came to love Palestine and its culture, his experiences allowed him to see Palestine beyond the conflict it is known for.

The morning after Carlson arrived in Bethlehem, his neighbors—complete strangers at the time—hosted a feast. They opened up their home, serving him plate after plate of lemony olives, warm pita and crisp cucumbers.

"I've seen this sort of genuine compassion and hospitality for the past two months," he says, "and every day I'm humbled."

Palestinian children at the Wi'am summer camp in Bethlehem.

Carlson has hope from one powerful moment from his experience. Following a particularly violent night, he attended a morning worship service next to the Israeli separation barrier in Bethlehem.

The morning after Carlson arrived in Bethlehem, his neighbors—complete strangers at the time—hosted a feast. They opened up their home, serving him plate after plate of lemony olives, warm pita and crisp cucumbers.

"As we concluded the meditative worship, a small child said a prayer aloud," Carlson says. "At 8 years old, she prayed for the safety of all the children in Gaza. She prayed for peace in their minds and hearts."—*Kate Yoder of Goshen College*

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Native Assembly 2014 attracts many non-Native folks

Participants learn about Indigenous worldviews and experience.

Of the 250 or so gathered for Native Assembly 2014, held July 28-31 in Winnipeg, Manitoba, non-Native folks overwhelmingly outnumbered Native people.

A few months earlier, planners were concerned that not enough white church folks would attend.

The theme for the gathering was "Ears to Earth, Eyes to God," which focused on the many references in Scripture that tie people to creation, to the land they occupy and the implications this holds for people of faith.

Vince Solomon led a workshop called "Where do Aboriginal Beliefs and Teachings Intersect with Scripture?" Solomon, the Aboriginal Neighbours Coordinator for MCC Manitoba, said, "There's only one reason I became an Anglican priest, and that is Jesus Christ."

Even as he underwent religious training, Solomon was rejected by white society. Fellow students marked his dorm room door with an X, warning others not to associate with him. Many of his own people have rejected him, asking why he chooses to be part of a church that hurt his people and why he is perpetuating that hurt. But in the midst of all that, Solomon recalled hearing God say, "I don't think I ever told you to stop being Native."

Since then, Solomon has been recovering the theology the land he grew up with. At the same time, he is studying Scripture to understand where Christianity lost the knowl edge that the created order is the "stage of God's revelati in history. … If you don't take care of it, the earth will vom you out" (Leviticus 20:22).

"We see creation in everything. This does not mean animism, monism, polytheism or pantheism." It was the Creator's intention for First Nations people to understand God through the attributes revealed to them through the land, he said.

During the question-and-answer time, someone in the dience asked what bugs him most about Western non-Nati culture. Solomon said: "Individuality. It should not supersede or get in the way of community." Individuality, he added, exists in every culture at some level. But he is stunned by the way it trumps community and caring for o another in a non-Native society, he said.

Brander McDonald, the Indigenous Relations Coordina for Mennonite Church British Columbia, led a workshop e ploring Indigenous worldviews. "My grandmother taught that I shouldn't look someone in the eye when I first meet them," he said. "She told me to look at their feet until I g to know them." He said the Indigenous perspective is abo harmony of body, mind, soul and our relationships with others. It places an emphasis on relationships, just as the Bib does, and it's rooted in the land, a gift of the Creator, designed to provide all we need.

Another workshop explored the loss of Turtle Island, the Indigenous term for North America. Led by Su and Harley Eagle, Mennonite Central Committee Canada digenous work coordinators, the Blanet Exercise had abou 30 participants stand barefoot on an array of quilts. Each held a card detailing their fate: skulls, trains and buffalos, residential schools, medicine wheels.

Someone read the history of Canada's relationship with Indigenous people. The British North America Act put "I dians and Lands reserved for Indians" under the control o the federal government. Spiritual practices were forbidde Women were relegated to nonentities. Corners of blanket were folded up, forcing participants closer together, some onto foreign territory. The blankets are folded again and again, growing smaller and further apart.

Eventually only a handful of participants held cards of t Medicine Wheel. They were the survivors. The exercise brought history to life in a new way for the non-Indigenou who formed most of the group.—*Dan Dyck and Deborah Froese of Mennonite Church Canada*

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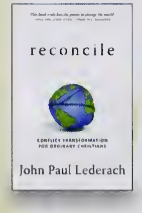

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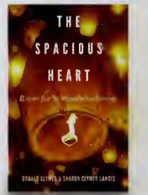

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Filipino pastors strengthen skills for next disaster

MCC works with a local Philippines organization in response to typhoon.

Pastors, from left, Philip Manlupa, Susan Garbe, Virgie Beduya (orange shirt), Lorenza Ecalde and Tony Mantua participate in a water rescue simulation that was part of a recent four-day peace, reconciliation and disaster preparedness workshop for 23 pastors.

A crucial part of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)'s response to last November's Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines includes training pastors to build networks for responding to future disasters and to improve their skills in helping people heal from trauma and resolve conflicts.

MCC is partnering with Peacebuilders Community Inc., (PBCI)—a local Philippines organization and a ministry of Mennonite Church Canada Witness, with ties to the Integrated Mennonite Church of the Philippines—to train pastors in each city in Samar and Leyte provinces.

PBCI's four-day trainings and ongoing education build the pastors' capacities in disaster preparedness and trauma healing and their skills in conflict transformation.

"The process includes a continuing dialogue in which each participant can identify their strengths and areas for improvement," says PBCI's Kriz Cruzado of Davao, Philippines, who is active in the project and also helps monitor MCC's other typhoon response efforts.

As part of trauma healing, pastors share the challenges of ministering to families affected by the typhoon in the midst of rebuilding their own homes. The conflict transformation sessions promote peaceful methods of dealing with stress in the ravaged communities.

In addition, pastors are encouraged to create plans to build disaster response networks in their own communities and of how they will share those plans with local officials.

Pastors also train in practical disaster response skills. PBCI encourages each pastor to purchase basic rescue items, such as a 50-meter-long nylon rope. Instead of life vests, they suggest using something more accessible and affordable such as empty bottles in a backpack.

And the training includes a simulation of a water rescue in case of flash flooding.

"The physical exercises built my confidence that I can share what I have learned with others," says Lorenza Ecalde, pastor of God's Glorious Church in Samar.

After the training with Ann Campbell-Janz, an MCC staff member who traveled to the Philippines to monitor MCC projects in May, several pastors said they now see the importance of heeding typhoon warnings early, protecting a certain amount of water and food with plastic, preparing a survival kit and encouraging all their congregants to do likewise.

Each pastor who took part in the training is expected to form a disaster response network in her or his community. Cruzado is working with pastors to help them plan and ensure they have the support and confidence they need to pass on their learnings.

"These networks are learning how to encourage their local government unit to develop a disaster preparedness plan and to offer their volunteer services so that their churches and local government can work hand-in-hand when and if another disaster occurs," Cruzado says.—*Laurie Oswald Robinson for Mennonite Central Committee*

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Applying grace in radical ways at Lithuanian university

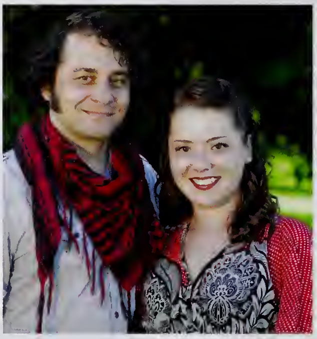
Alisha and Joshua Garber 'prefer to lead from behind or beside.'

Alisha and Joshua Garber infuse two Anabaptist values, hospitality and reconciliation, into the lives of their students at LCC International University in Lithuania.

The Garbers, mission associates with Mennonite Mission Network, bring their nurturing ministry to the students they mentor at the university. They're about to start their third year at LCC International, a Christian university started in 1991.

Alisha is the director of community life and dean of discipline, while Joshua will be the spiritual formation coordinator after two years of being the resident director.

"We prefer to lead from behind or beside," says Joshua. "I try to be a sounding board, and be transparent. I like to remove myself from a position of power over a student and instead say, 'Hey, let's go on a bike ride' or, 'What's bugging you or going on in your life?' "



Joshua and Alisha Garber

Alisha is excited to implement a restorative justice model for the disciplinary process that encourages mentorship. In her role as the dean of discipline, she has noticed that the system, which involved punishment through fines, didn't teach students to make better choices. Instead it taught students to avoid consequences. Or, if they had enough money, they simply had a check ready before they threw a party, she says.

This year, there won't be fines, and when violations do occur, an adult will walk alongside the offenders and talk about what their goals are and how to redirect energy into positive goals.

"The students really bought into this, so next year we're going full force with a restorative justice model," says Alisha. "In a culture where everything is unequivocally right or wrong and where the students most likely grew up in a place that was corrupt, this will not be easy. So hold us in your prayers for that."

She understands the struggle that students will go through as they shift from a punitive model to a model of grace. She didn't grow up Anabaptist and worked as a military counselor for six years.

"With the soldiers I dealt with before, I was legalistic in the way that I bossed them around," says Alisha. "In my time working in Lithuania, I've seen that things are never absolutely wrong or absolutely right. You want it to be, because that's easier, but it never is. Applying grace in radical ways has been a gradual process for me, but a very important process."

In Joshua's new role as spiritual formation director, he says he is looking forward to being able to accomplish his goal to be in a position where he can talk more deliberatel about his faith.

"I also have five students who are incredibly passionate about this same thing," he says. "They told me they wante to join the team because they wanted t transform the campus. And that's very exciting to me."

He told his spiritual life team tha this next year will be about going to th people. They're going to try to implement an incarnational ministry, which an approach of being like Jesus to the people you connect with regularly and using your gifts to minister.

When the Garbers first arrived on campus, the university was hosting a summer language institute, organized Mennonite Mission Network worker Robin Gingerich, where students can learn English. They noticed there wer only a few people on campus, and they were all isolated.

Since they had just moved from an intentional commun their first thought was that they needed to organize a potluck so that everyone would get together, says Joshua. The potluck brought together faculty, staff and students, w didn't usually do things together outside of the classroom.

One student, Ejike Nnamdi Nwosu, liked the idea so much that he started to host his own "underground potlucks" once regular classes started.

"There were kids from all over the university who hav nothing in common, who don't even hang out together, yet they're eating together and talking and sharing their lives, says Joshua. This was a change from the typical dining culture at the school where students usually took their food into their rooms to eat.

The Garbers also noticed a change in Nwosu's behavior Before, he wouldn't pray in public and asked Joshua to pra before the meals. But now, two years later, Nwosu asks th blessing for the food.

"As Anabaptists, I think God is calling us to be a positiv voice in this conversation that is happening in Europe," sa Joshua. "We are a new voice, at least to the students, in th faith conversation happening on campus."—*Sara Alvarez o Mennonite Mission Network*

Anabaptist Witness journal's first issue due in October

New journal renews *Mission Focus* journal under a new name

The editorial committee assigned to renew the 42-year-old *Mission Focus* journal has announced the new name of the publication—*Anabaptist Witness*—and is preparing for the release of the first issue in October.

Editors Jamie Pitts of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., and Jamie Ross of Mennonite Mission Network believe the new name sets a direction for the publication that matches its mission.

"We want to foster dialogue among Anabaptist Christians around the world who are committed to the church's mission," Pitts says.

Ross adds: "I think we have the only peer-reviewed journal dealing with missiology from a specific faith tradition. Others are from organizational or ecumenical perspectives."

> We have the only peer-reviewed journal dealing with missiology from a specific faith tradition.
> —Jamie Ross

However, while the journal exists for and about Anabaptists and Anabaptism, she notes that there are people in other faith traditions who value the commitment Anabaptists have made to long-term partnerships around the world. The journal will give opportunities for voices from some of these other groups to join the conversation as well.

The audiences, Pitts says, are mission-minded pastors and lay people, mission agency staff, mission workers and people interested in academic study and reflection on missiology. The editors believe their plan for the journal gives it flexibility to speak to these different audiences within the Anabaptist-Mennonite faith groups and to include contributors and readers from the wider church.

The first issue of *Anabaptist Witness* focuses on Anabaptist and Mennonite understandings of mission and the interchange among mission practice, missiology and Anabaptist identity. It will reflect 10 different country and ethnic perspectives as well as different agency perspectives. Articles will vary from an interview to a sermon to more academic reflections. The fall issue contains an article in French with an English translation available online, and another article is intended to be available in both English and Spanish.

The editors have established a website, anabaptistwitness.org, where all content will be available to read online for no cost. Through Amazon CreateSpace services, the journal will be available for digital reading devices and in print. Anyone who wants to receive it in print will be able to place orders on the *Anabaptist Witness* website for $10 a copy plus shipping charges. Those who wish to have a traditional subscription may contact Pitts at jpitts@ambs.edu.

Currently the *Anabaptist Witness* website offers the opportunity to sign up to receive updates when issues are available.

The editors also have extended a call for papers for the second issue, scheduled for spring 2015, on the theme of how our understanding of the Anabaptist faith leads us to engage with other religions. To read this call for papers on the theme of how our understanding of the Anabaptist faith leads us to engage with other religions, visit the web page of the previous *Mission Focus* journal: www.ambs.edu/Mission-Focus.

Anabaptist Witness is a collaborative project of Mennonite Church Canada, Mennonite Mission Network and Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary. An editorial committee works with the editors in guiding the content of the journal. Members of this committee are Malinda E. Berry, Elkhart, Ind.; Steve Heinrichs, Winnipeg, Manitoba; Matthew Krabill, Pasadena, Calif.; SaeJin Lee, Elkhart, Ind.; Gregory Rabus, Backnang, Germany; and Isaac Villegas, Chapel Hill, N.C.
—*Mary E. Klassen of AMBS*

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Prayer and action for Gaza

Timothy Seidel provides a context for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The terrible situation in Gaza continues. Gaza is one of the most vulnerable, densely populated places on earth, referred to by Israeli human rights organizations as the world's largest open-air prison.

Approximately 1.8 million Palestinians live in a 140 square-mile area that has been under an Israeli siege since 2006. Brutalized under decades of military occupation, the majority of Gazans are refugees from the 1948 war. With decades of limited economic access and opportunity due to Israeli closures, today some 80 percent of Gazans receive international food assistance, 60 percent of households are food insecure or vulnerable to food insecurity. Palestinians do not have control over borders or movement in and out of Gaza, and live constantly under the threat of Israeli military incursions, shelling and extrajudicial, targeted assassinations that terrorize Gaza's population.

The vulnerability of this population is evidenced these past weeks—as it was in 2006, 2008-09 and 2012—with over 1,000 Gazans killed, thousands more wounded and tens of thousands displaced in Israel's ongoing military operation, and in which more than 50 Israelis have been killed. This military operation only hurts Gaza's civilian population and unmasks this campaign of collective punishment as a predictable and uncreative display of Israeli military might over and against 1.8 million poor people. The damage to civilian infrastructure, schools and hospitals, raises serious medical concerns.

> The main reason the humanitarian situation in Gaza is such an issue is because the Palestinian people there live as prisoners.

The main reason the humanitarian situation in Gaza is such an issue is because the Palestinian people there live as prisoners, creating a situation that does not provide the opportunity for a prosperous future but only just prevents Gaza from slipping into humanitarian disaster on a daily basis.

In response to the distressing situation in Gaza, the Mennonite Palestine Israel Network (MennoPIN) has gathered resources for prayer, education, advocacy and action. To learn more, visit the MennoPIN website at mennopin.wordpress.com/gazaunderattack. For example, you will find a "Prayer and Action for Gaza" bulletin insert in English and Spanish that you can use as a template for your own congr gation this Sunday.

You can also keep up to date with what is going on and ways to get involved, by visiting the websites of Mennonit Central Committee, Christian Peacemaker Teams and Me nonite Church USA. For example, the MCC Washington O fice issued an action alert to call on Congress to stop U.S.

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complicity in suffering and to support a just peace in Palestine and Israel by addressing underlying causes.

Mennonites in the United States have been building relationships in Palestine-Israel for more than 60 years. Mennonite Central Committee has worked alongside Palestinians and Israelis for decades. An important expression of this work is education and advocacy, drawing attention to the suffering in Gaza and communicating the stories of Palestinian and Israeli peacebuilders to U.S. audiences and Washington policymakers.

Mennonites in the United States have been building relationships in Palestine-Israel for more than 60 years.

This also includes lifting up the voices of Palestinian Christians, for example, in the Kairos Palestine call. The Kairos call understands peacebuilding as a shared work for justice and challenges us to work for justice at home, addressing root causes of violence: a work that requires attention to the U.S. role in this conflict, through our financial and military support of Israel's occupation of Palestine; a work that recognizes seeking justice in Gaza must be complemented by seeking justice at home, actively dismantling structures of oppression such as racism and poverty as well as militarism; a work that requires hope, courage and risk.

The Mennonite Palestine Israel Network (MennoPIN) is a grassroots, U.S. network working for peace with justice in Palestine-Israel. Learn more about MennoPIN, including more information on Kairos Palestine and the call to boycotts and divestment, at mennopin.wordpress.com. To join the network conversation, send an email to mennopin@gmail.com.

The Gaza Strip: context

The Gaza Strip is a narrow strip of land along the Mediterranean Sea in the Middle East, bordered by Egypt to the southwest and Israel to the north and east. The majority of Palestinians in Gaza are Muslim, with less than 1 percent of them Christian. And the majority of Gazans are refugees, living in refugee camps across the Gaza Strip.

Following the British Mandate over Palestine and the 1948 war that saw the creation of the state of Israel, the Gaza Strip was occupied by Egypt. After the 1967 war, Israel gained control over all of historic Palestine and implemented a military occupation over those remaining territories, including East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

In August 2005, Israel unilaterally "disengaged" from Gaza, evacuating its settler population as well as redeploying its military forces to its border. This ostensibly gave Palestinians total jurisdiction over Gaza. However, Israel maintained complete control over the Gaza Strip, leaving Israel still an occupying power over Gaza.

That same year, the Israeli human rights organizations B'tselem and HaMoked jointly published a report describing the Gaza Strip as "one big prison." Almost 10 years later, this report remains relevant. With decades of limited economic access and opportunity due to Israeli closures—leading to a debilitating process of what one scholar has labeled "de-development."

The recent Israeli attack on Gaza has created incredible uncertainty. The military strategy that has marked Israel's "Operation Protective Edge" only hurts Gaza's civilian population. With much of the water supply and sewage system dependent on electricity and the impact on hospitals and limited supplies, the damage to civilian infrastructure raises serious medical concerns and unmasks this campaign of collective punishment of the Palestinian people—actions clearly in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which Israel is a signatory—as a predictable and uncreative display of Israeli military might over and against 1.8 million poor Palestinians. And with the thousands dead and dying, tens of thousands wounded and homeless, Gaza's children severely traumatized, and Gaza's population without reliable water or electricity, the obvious disproportionality of the Israeli military response only underscores its unacceptability.

As the occupying power, Israel has certain obligations under international law in regard to the Palestinian people. Israel has completely shirked this responsibility and left the burden of responding to the needs of one of the most densely populated areas on earth—the great majority of whom are refugees—to the international community, creating a situation that does not provide the opportunity for a prosperous future but only just prevents Gaza from slipping into humanitarian disaster on a daily basis.

As the occupying power, Israel has certain obligations under international law in regard to the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict: context

Many would have us understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in abstract religious terms, such as Christian Zionism, or as part of a broader "clash of civilizations" or "global war on terror." It could be argued, however, that Palestine is best understood as an encounter between a settler colonial movement—looking for liberation, for a land without a people for a people without a land, seeking to extend control over particular territory—and the indigenous population already inhabiting a land that turned out not to be empty after all. What was independence for one was catastrophe for the other.

For example, for most Israeli Jews, May 14, 1948, is Independence Day—a heroic story of freedom, liberty and success in overcoming great difficulties. No longer would Jews live the uncertain life of minority communities; rather, they would be masters of their own fate in their own land.

But for Palestinians, May 15, 1948, is known as the "Nakba," an Arabic word meaning "catastrophe." Nakba refers to the massive dispossession of the majority of the Palestinian people during the period of 1947 to 1949. Between 750,000 and 900,000 Palestinians became refugees, either having been expelled by Zionist militias or having fled for their lives during the fighting. Meanwhile, Israeli military forces destroyed more than 500 Palestinian villages.

Despite the optimism that has accompanied the various peace processes over recent years, the expansion of Israeli domination over Palestinian life and land and the story of Palestinian dispossession have continued.

Even Palestinians who remained inside what became Israel experienced dispossession, with tens of thousands of Palestinians becoming internally displaced people, alienated from their land. "Naksa," another Arabic word, is used to refer to the expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza during the 1967 war, with some 400,000 Palestinians becoming refugees. It also marks the beginning of Israel's illegal military occupation of these territories.

Despite the optimism that has accompanied the various peace processes over recent years, the expansion of Israeli domination over Palestinian life and land and the story of Palestinian dispossession have continued. Whether it is more land being expropriated for the construction of a 430-mile wall or separation barrier, the dramatic growth of illegal settlements, including in and around Jerusalem, the proliferation of a closure system of checkpoints and roadblocks that obstruct mobility, the demolition of homes and other forms of collective punishment, the one-big-prison-status of Gaza or the continuing state of dispossession of 7 million Palestinians refugees worldwide, Palestinian livelihoods are devastated by military occupation, and their experience of dispossession continues unabated.

It appears that the separation barrier—though condemned as illegal in 2004 by the International Court of Justice—will become Israel's de facto border, leaving a Palestinian quasi-state composed of several isolated island of land on roughly 40 to 50 percent of the West Bank. Palestinians will be confined to what some have called "reservations" or, evoking South Africa under apartheid, "Bantustans," which will be partially connected by a network of tunnels controlled by Israel. Industrial zones will b established at the edges of these areas so that businesses can take advantage of a cheap, imprisoned labor pool.

In this version of the language of "two states," "the stat of Israel" essentially equals annexing all major colonies in the West Bank, including "greater Jerusalem" and the Jord Valley, with control over all of historic Palestine, fulfilling t vision expressed in the 1967 Allon Plan and shared by Arie Sharon, Ehud Olmert and others, of "maximum territory, minimum Arabs."

Subsequently, "the state of Palestine" will essentially equal those isolated islands of land on the West Bank—completely unrealistic, completely unviable and completely lacking any sense of human security for them. Ilan Pappé describes the goal of this Israeli unilateralism thus: "a strong Jewish state dominating a small Palestinian protectorate, without a solution to the refugee problem or a significant Palestinian presence or sovereignty in Jerusalem."

For many, this destroys any hope for a two-state solution to this horrible conflict.—*Timothy Seidel, a member of Community Mennonite Church of Lancaster, Pa., serves on the steering committee of the Mennonite Palestine Israel Network*

Resources on Gaza and Israel

B'tselem and HaMoked, *One Big Prison: Freedom of Movement to and from the Gaza Strip on the Eve of the Disengagement Plan* (March 2005).
http://www.btselem.org/download/200503_gaza_prison_eng
ish.pdf.

See Sara M. Roy, *The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-development* (Institute for Palestine Studies, 1995) and Sara M. Roy, *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflic* (Pluto Press, 2006).

See Tom Segev, *"Maximum Territory, Minimum Arabs," Haaretz* (Jan. 13, 2006).

Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.255.

Denver couple receives Everence Journey Award

Regional award recipients also named from around the country

Merv and Ardith Eigsti of Denver

Merv and Ardith Eigsti have been named the recipients of the national Journey Award from Everence, which was presented Aug. 3, at their home church, Glennon Heights Mennonite Church in Lakewood, Colo.

This award recognizes the Eigstis' abundant hospitality to people of all races and nationalities in their hometown of Denver. They are models of how ordinary people can give their time and share their home with many diverse individuals, including immigrants, new neighbors and church attenders.

"Merv and Ardith have lived a life so full of giving that for many in the communities with which they interact, they have become the very definition of humble generosity," said Betsy Headrick McCrae, Glennon Heights pastor at the presentation.

Created in 2001, the Journey Award highlights what people of faith are doing as stewards of their God-given gifts. As a part of the award, Everence will make a $5,000 donation to the charity of the recipient's choice. The Eigstis will give a portion of the award to the following:

- Rocky Mountain Mennonite Camp
- Glennon Heights Mennonite Church
- Second Chance Center
- Community Ministries
- Family Promise of Denver
- Hopi Mission School

Everence also announced the regional Journey Award honorees, who can make $500 donations to the charities of their choice. They are as follows:

- Ken Harder, Meade, Kan.
- Paul Munk, Chapel Hill, N.C
- Wilmer Otto, Arcola, Ill.
- Paul and Maryann Payne, Belleville, Pa.
- Ron and Arbutus Sider, Lansdale, Pa.
- Bob Stoner, Millersville, Pa.
- George and Carol Tobin, Harrisonburg, Va.

Everence helps individuals, organizations and congregations integrate finances with faith through a national team of advisors and representatives. Everence offers banking, insurance and financial services with community benefits and stewardship education. Everence is a ministry of Mennonite Church USA and other churches. To learn more, visit everence.com or call 800-348-7468.—*Everence*

The Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies congratulates

Douglas H. Shantz
Professor of Christian Thought at the University of Calgary

Recipient of the **2014 Dale W. Brown Book Award** for Outstanding Scholarship in Anabaptist and Pietist Studies

An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013

"[Shantz] has provided an excellent entrée to the history and character of Pietism." – Carter Lindberg, Boston University School of Theology (from The Catholic Historical Review)

Join us for Doug Shantz's public lecture at the Young Center on September 23, 2014 at 7:30 p.m.

Nominations for the 2015 Outstanding Book Award are due December 10, 2014. Visit **www.etown.edu/youngctr** for details.

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CALENDAR

Hesston College Homecoming Weekend, Sept. 25-28, in Hesston, Kan.

Bethel College Fall Festival, North Newton, Kan., Oct. 18.

WORKERS

Gibson, DaQuan, was ordained as pastor at The Way Thru Christ Community Fellowship, Chester, Pa., on June 29.

Horst, Arlin, was ordained as deacon at Shiloh Mennonite Church, Reading, Pa., on April 13.

King, Linford, was installed as intentional interim pastor at Laurel Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on June 16.

Peachey, Jeremy, was licensed as minister of youth and young adults at Community Mennonite Fellowship, Milton, Pa., on May 14.

Peters, Jay, was installed as acting lead pastor at Hernley Mennonite Church, Manheim, Pa., on June 1.

Peters, Margie, was licensed as acting lead pastor at Hernley Mennonite Church, Manheim, Pa., on June 1.

Westmoreland, James M., Jr., was installed as lead pastor of Newlinville Mennonite Church, Coatesville, Pa., on June 1.

OBITUARIES

Amstutz, Julia Ruth "Judy" Ebersole, 80 La Junta, Colo., died April 5. Spouse: Mahlon Amstutz. Parents: Clarence and Ruth Ebersole. Children: Lynn, Lori, Rod, Rita. Funeral: April 15 at First Mennonite Church, Denver, Colo.

Bock, Mary Emma Blough, 81, Harrisonburg, Va., died June 22. Spouse: Warren Bock. Parents: Harry and Freda Berkey Blough. Children: Susan Earley, Alan. Funeral: July 12 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Christner, Jeanette May Krabill, 90, Iowa City, Iowa, died July 15. Spouse: Truman Christner (deceased). Parents: Lester and Lena Rich Krabill. Children: Anthony, Brenda Christner, Eric, Cheryl Christner White, Douglas; 10 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 10 at First Mennonite Church, Iowa City.

Dietzel, Arnold Jonathan, 99, Hesston, Kan., died July 4. Spouse: Wilmetta D. Weaver Dietzel. Parents: Samuel and Elma Dietzel. Children: Ronald, Margaret Dietzel Hilegass, Carol Cranston; seven grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 8 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Flanagan, Daniel Joseph, 55, Mishawaka, Ind., died June 28. Spouse: Shabaun Eversole Flanagan. Parents: John and Joseclyn Johnson Flanagan. Children: Cameron Ryan, Connor James. Funeral: Aug. 9 at Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend, Ind.

Gwin, Harry S. "Hap," 87, Martinsburg, Pa., died Aug. 3. Spouse: Dorothy Graybill Gwin. Parents: Harry R. and Tressa Snyder Gwin. Children: Barbara Schumacher, Wesley, Shelley, Harry; eight grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 7 at Martinsburg Mennonite Church.

Landis, Clyde Derstine, 84, Franconia, Pa., died July 14. Spouse: Anna Godshall Landis. Parents: Linford A. and Susie N. Derstine Landis. Children: Joelene Landis, Nancy Gaugler, Bradley; nine grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 20 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville, Pa.

Metzler, Emerson James, 5 days old Lancaster, Pa., died July 18. Parents: J. K and Kelly L. Stoltzfus Metzler. Twin broth Will Ethan Metzler. Graveside service: Ju 22 at Hershey Mennonite Cemetery, Kin ers, Pa.

Miller, Herma V. Hostetler Blosser, 92, Orrville, Ohio, died April 8. Spouse: J Miller. Spouse: Paul Blosser (deceased). Parents: Asa and Ida Miller Hostetler. Ch dren: Lyle Blosser, Myrna Blosser, Nyla B rett; step-children: Marlene Campbell, Dallas Miller, Fred Miller, Jim Miller, Gar Miller, Anita Bixler, Eric Miller; three gra children; 13 step-grandchildren; many great-grandchildren and step-great-gran children. Funeral: April 12 at Smithville Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio.

Nussbaum, Irvin A., 89, Goshen, Ind., died July 10. Spouse: Nelda Zehr Glick Nussbaum. Spouse: Arlene Steiner Nussbaum (deceased). Parents: Amos A. and Lydia Falb Nussbaum. Children: Ray, Lar Dean, Karen Miller, Marlin, Ted, LaJane Moore; step-children: Phil Glick, Kim Gli Kevin Glick, Mike Glick; 21 grandchildre seven step-grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; nine step-great-grandchi dren. Funeral: July 16 at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Olson, Selma Esther Glanzer, 86, Fr man, S.D., died Aug. 2. Spouse: Donald V Olson. Parents: David D. and Susie Glan Funeral: Aug. 6 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Ruth, Ruth Bower, 84, Souderton, Pa died Aug. 7. Spouse: Walton C. Ruth (deceased). Parents: Harvey and Lillie Halte man Bower. Children: Marlin, Elaine Gro Ronald; six grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 11 at Soud ton Mennonite Homes.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also su mit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Stoltzfus, John, Jr., 73, Goshen, Ind., died July 17, of Fahr's disease. Spouse: Colleen Stoltzfus. Parents: John Stoltzfus, Sr., and Laura Beckler Stoltzfus. Children: Tonya Stoltzfus-Miller, Chad; six grandchildren. Funeral: July 22 at East Union Mennonite Church, Kalona, Iowa.

Yoder, Helen Janette Slaubaugh, 93, Wellman, Iowa, died July 14. Spouse: Paul E. M. Yoder (deceased). Parents: William and Naomi Hooley Slaubaugh. Children: Kathleen Erteld, Christine Falcon, Phil, Orie; seven grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 18 at Wellman Mennonite Church.

Letters *(Continued from page 54)*

Church USA." I acknowledge my technical mistake in referring to the "executive director" as a "papal office." The Vatican is the Pope's executive branch, and he has authority over its organization and action, which I assume our "executive director" does not have.

Having said that, the Bishop of Rome is given his papal authority by a bureaucratic election much like the Executive Board's executive director, and there are checks and balances on his authority. In Mennonite Church USA, the director has been "delegated" by an executive board and serves as its executive secretary—a term we used to use for such positions. But how does that make him executive director of Mennonite Church USA? What does our ease with that terminology say about the hierarchical polity issues we face?

And this raises a related question: In what sense does the Executive Board "manage" the affairs of the denomination? What part of the organized church's bureaucracy does the board manage? Its creedal system? Its spiritual life? Its requirements for church membership? Its credentialing certification? I would have thought its primary job is to facilitate the smooth functioning of the organization as it serves the organic spiritual life and witness of the congregations and conferences under its auspices. When we confuse the office of "bishop-pastor" and "executive officer," as it is mixed in the office of the Holy See at Rome, we become embroiled in the episcopal problem of top-down autocratic authority that has plagued the church for thousands of years.

So what is the assignment of the executive director of Mennonite Church USA? Soto Albrecht and Diller's reply notes that he "has been responsible for articulating the theology and understandings of the denomination as expressed in its approved documents." That is like the description of the office of the Roman Catholic archbishop who oversees the "Doctrine of the Faith" as part of the papal office. Does the Executive Board's "spiritual oversight in articulating the vision of Mennonite Church USA" give it authority over the credentialing process of the conferences and congregations? And does that in turn give its executive officer, whatever she or he is called, the administrative role as manager?

The problem is not one of technical organization or about Ervin Stutzman's execution of his office as assigned. It is at the heart of how we understand the lines of authority in our discernment of the vision for the Mennonite Church USA. Is discernment a bureaucratic or a brotherly-sisterly process? And how do we deal with the disagreements within the body of Christ?—*Norman Kraus, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Dwelling on Yoder

How much longer will we dwell on this? Mentioning Yoder's name 15 times in the August issue makes me ask, Does continuing incrimination bring healing to someone somewhere? Could this be a form of revenge? Is it not time to work on ministering to the people who have suffered or are suffering from sexual abuse so that they may redeem their memories?—*Wilma Shank, Goshen, Ind.*

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RESOURCES

Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest: Merton, Berrigan, Yoder and Muste at the Gethsemani Abbey Peacemakers Retreat by Gordon Oyer (Cascade Books, 2014, $33) reports on an unprecedented gathering of 13 peace activists in the fall of 1964 at the Tappist monastery where Thomas Merton lived. Catholics, including the Daniel and Philip Berrigan, and Protestants, including John Howard Yoder, met over three days to discuss the spiritual roots of protest.

The Road That I Must Walk: A Disciple's Journey by Darrin W. Snyder Belousek (Cascade Books, 2014, $23) represents the author's own wrestling with the call and cost of discipleship across a decade. The book is a collection of ethical reflections, biblical meditations and spiritual ponderings about following Jesus.

Signs by Jean Vanier (Paulist Press, 2014, $14.95) identifies the seen paths of transformation at the heart of L'Arche, the community Vanier founded that welcomes people with severe learning difficulties into a life of freedom and dignity. The seven paths are from humiliation to humility, from normalization to the awakening conscience, from exclusion to encounter, from power to authority, from isolation to community, from strength to vulnerability, from secret to mystery.

Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer by Rowan Wiliams (Eerdmans, 2014, $10) explores four essential components of the Christian life: baptism, the Bible, the Eucharist and prayer. Despite huge differences in Christian thinking and practice both today and in past centuries, he says, these four basic elements have remained constant and indispensable for the majority of those who call themselves Christians.

Toughest People to Love: How to Understand, Lead and Love the Difficult People in Your Life—Including Yourself by Chuck DeGroat (Eerdmans, 2014, $14) explores the basics of how people "tick" and encourages leaders to examine and take care of themselves so that they can better understand and care for others. Difficult people—controlling narcissists, out-of-control addicts, obsessive-compulsive critics, those with a dark side—affect leaders everywhere, from leaders of many to managers of a few. DeGroat has experience as a pastor, professor and therapist.

Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians by John Paul Lederach (Herald Press, 2014, $14.99) is a revised and updated edition of *The Journey Toward Reconciliation* (1999), which was based on Lederach's work in 25 countries across five continents. This new book tells dramatic stories of what works and what doesn't in resolving and transforming conflicts.

Seeking a **part-time bivocational pastor** for a small congregation is a Northern Lower Michigan resort community. Contact: **Maple River Mennonite Church**; Stan Kauffman: 231-330-1661; Heidi Burkhart: heidi.burkhart@hotmail.com.

Explore God's love with the new **Shine Sunday school curriculum**! *Shine: Living in God's Light* has engaging stories and activities that will teach children the Bible, understand that they are known and loved by God and learn what it means to follow Jesus. Find sample sessions, Bible outlines and more at www.shinecurriculum.com.

Executive director: Mennonite Women USA seeks a strong, visionary leader and fund-raiser to direct the overall mission and vision of empowering women and women's groups within the Mennonite church. The executive director supervises dispersed staff and coordinates and develops the various ministries, programs, publications and promotional material. This full-time position requires working independently but also part of a team, excellent verbal and written skills, including public speaking, and ability to build relationships with people of diverse backgrounds. Involves travel. See full description at mwusa.org. Send inquiries or resumé to Kathy Bilderback at kabilderback@cableone.net by Sept. 30.

Landisville Mennonite Church, Landisville, Pa., is seeking a **full-time associate pastor of youth and young adults**. For more information, please contact the search committee at search@landisvillemennonite.org.

Are you the one God has been preparing for us? **Fairview Mennonite Church** is seeking a **full-time lead pastor**. Located in rural northern Michigan, with weekly attendance around 100, the heart of FMC's vision is to build relationships in the community that meet people's needs. If you are interested in exploring possibilities at Fairview Mennonite Church, please email the search committee at fmcpastorsearch@gmail.com or call Don Haskin at 989-335-3153.

Shine: Living in God's Light, the Sunday school curriculum produced by MennoMedia and Brethren Press, is accepting applications for **writers**. Details are available at www.ShineCurriculum.com/Write. Application and sample session deadline is Dec.15, 2014.

Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa., is seeking a **full-time lead pastor** for a congregation with 450 active members. We are looking for someone who has experience in providing leadership in developing, promoting and implementing a congregational vision and direction that is an expression of the biblical vision and is led by the Holy Spirit. Please send resumé to Franconia Mennonite Church, 613 Harleysville Pike, Telford, PA 18969, or email to mkratz@franconiamennonite.org. Contact can be made with the search committee chairperson, Wayne L. Derstine at 215-588-5787.

Quakertown Christian School located in Quakertown, Pa., including grades preschool, K-8 and 9-12 (Learning Community) is looking for an **executive director** with a solid Christian faith consistent with the Mennonite or Anabaptist church to manage all aspects of our school. We are looking for an individual with strong management skills including operations, programming and advancement. Individual must have experience in financial management to be considered. Send resume to Brenda Jones: employment@quakertownchristian.org.

Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board staff seeks a **full-time web and social media content manager**. Proven skills in web content management and site maintenance as well as a bachelor's degree in graphic design, information systems, communications, marketing or computer science is required. Office location to be determined, although Elkhart, Ind., and Newton, Kan., preferred. For more information, view Employment Opportunities at www.MennoniteUSA.org or email Iris De León-Hartshorn: IrisDH@MennoniteUSA.org.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read **Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

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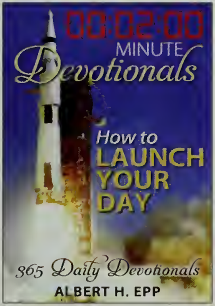

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- Myron Augsburger

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Addicted to the culture wars

Peter Epp will begin a master of arts in theological studies at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba, this fall. He can be reached at p_epp@hotmail.com.

If you're hot-blooded like I am, it's probably hard to avoid when you turn on the TV or surf the Internet. You know you're too good for it and you know it's not good for you, but you also know that it's always there waiting for you, enticing you into its embrace of false satisfaction. I'll admit it, and if you're honest with yourself, I bet you will too: We're all addicted to the culture wars these days.

If you don't know what these "culture wars" are that I'm referring to, or if you're not sure if this applies to you, let's try this quiz:

1. Do you mostly watch or mostly scoff at Fox News? If you answered yes to either, you're probably influenced by the culture wars.

2. Do you find yourself feeling emotionally invested in political Facebook posts and arguments, even if you're not really all that close with—or haven't even met—some of the people commenting? If you answered yes, you're at least somewhat sucked into the culture wars.

Our greatest allegiance isn't to the culture wars but to Christ.

3. If you're really honest with yourself, do you know that you will always want to view Obamacare as a success or a failure, regardless of whether or not it seems to be succeeding or failing for the people around you? If you answered yes to this, you're probably under the influence of the culture wars. And if you answered, "I can admit that Obamacare might be a failure, but only because they should have gone with a single-payer approach in the first place" or, "I can admit that Obamacare might help a lot of people, but it's my freedom that I'm worried about," you don't get to pat yourself on the back for this question. Change your yes to a YES! for the purposes of this quiz.

Even if you answered no to all these, chances are you can think of many people who wouldn't. That's what's especially dangerous about the culture wars: We're all under their influence—even if we're not.

To be clear, none of these reactions is anything other than human. We've surely been reacting to one another in these ways since Snorg battled Snarg over whether or not free use of his newfangled fire would just enable the lazy cave people or just allow them a more equal opportunity to move into a bigger cave some day. Or, if my ref ence to the possible existence of cave people is stoking anyone's culture wars fire, just replace that with, "since Cain battled Abel over what sa rifice was most politically correct." Or, if my inclusion of both is troubling to those who would prefer either, just battle it out on my Facebook wall or something.

To get back to the point, there's nothing wro with convictions, differences of opinion and vig ous political debate. The problem with our time and society is that our ever-present news, new commentary and social media has turned up th volume on the temptation that come with having con victions, differences of opi ion and debates. Where we should be looking out for t common good and using d bate and differing political views to get there, we're now looking out for our political views and refle ively trying to shape reality to win debates on b half of those views.

So what does all this mean for the churc Unfortunately, it seems to mean that it's makin it really hard to be the church. In fact, it may be undermining the very foundation of how we're supposed to be the church.

In *A Precarious Peace* (Herald Press, 2006), Chris K. Huebner reminds us that Jesus invite us into a faith that is "disruptive" and "unsettling" to our own comforts and self-assurances. And while I'm sure we all know this superficial I'm not sure how often we apply it to the churc like Huebner does. If we did, we'd find that our greatest goals were to create spaces, Huebner writes, "where we can be honest with one another, where we can be vulnerable to one anoth and, in so doing, become open to the possibility forgiveness."

In a context like that, we'd know that our diff ing opinions weren't something we cling to but gifts we give to and receive from one another t help us all maintain Christ's disruption in our lives. We'd recognize that our greatest allegianc isn't to the culture wars but to Christ, who call us to see one another's differences as opportun ties to remain constantly humble, open and uns tled. TM

FILM REVIEW

A Most Wanted Man (R) is based on John le Carré's 2008 novel, which shows how political infighting and overreaction to 9/11 lead to inhumane treatment of people. Set in Hamburg, where Mohamed Atta had planned the 9/11 attacks, the story involves a half-Chechen, half-Russian, brutally tortured immigrant who lays claim to his father's ill-gotten fortune. The U.S. and German security agencies become interested in him.—*Gordon Houser*

BOOK REVIEWS

The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years by Steven P. Miller (Oxford University Press, 2014, $24.95) is an excellent exploration of "the place and meaning of evangelical Christianity in the United States from the 1970s through the first decade of the 21st century." In detail, Miller tracks the ways evangelicalism influenced American culture and politics and how it changed in the process.—*gh*

Good News: The Advent of Salvation in the Gospel of Luke by Darrin W. Snyder Belousek (Liturgical Press, 2014, $16.95) explicates the various dimensions of the good news as presented in Luke: deliverance from fear, healing from sin and sickness, repentance and revival, justice in word and deed, praise in songs of peace and freedom, and mission in service to the nations. "Any message that attempts to separate or differentiate 'the salvation of God' from 'the peace of God's reign' is a false message," Belousek writes.—*gh*

Living Thoughtfully, Dying Well: A Doctor Explains How to Make Death a Natural Part of Life by Glen E. Miller (Herald Press, 2014, $12.99) is a practical and personal book about preparing for our death. Miller writes, "The decisions made in the process of dying will determine the quality of the dying experience for the patient and family." He draws on his own experience of surviving two heart attacks and two incidents of cardiac arrest.—*gh*

ONLINE

Killing print is more myopic thinking

Most of you, though not all, reading this are doing so by holding a magazine made of paper. That print medium is under durress in a culture obsessed with immediate profits rather than long-term health.

In an Aug. 10 article, "Print Is Down and Now Out: Media Companies Spin Off Newspapers, to Uncertain Futures" (*New York Times*), David Carr paints a rather dismal picture of the future of newspapers and magazines.

He reports on how, in just over a week, "three of the biggest players in American newspapers—Gannett, Tribune Company and E. W. Scripps, companies built on print franchises that expanded into television—dumped those properties like yesterday's news in a series of spinoffs."

It's one more example of how the financial desires of Wall Street are deemed more important than the needs of Main Street, where most of us live.

Although newspapers continue to generate cash and solid earnings, those results are not enough to satisfy investors.

Media giant Time Warner cut loose Time, Inc., the largest magazine publisher in the United States, which carried $1.3 billion in debt.

E. W. Scripps and Journal Communications merged, then spun off their combined newspapers, leaving behind a company focused on broadcast television.

On Aug. 5, the Tribune Company officially introduced a separate publishing division so that it could concentrate on television and handed the new company $350 million in debt.

That same day, Gannett, the largest U.S. newspaper publisher and publisher of *USA Today*, said its print division would go it alone.

Carr compares these events to one long episode of "Divorce Court." He writes: "It's not that television is such a spectacular business—there are plenty of challenges on that front—but newspapers and magazines are clearly going to be smaller, less ambitious businesses and journalistic enterprises regardless of how carefully they are operated."

What does this mean for those of us on Main Street? It means a diminishment of quality news reporting.

A better question is, Do we care? Are we happy reading opinions (generally the ones we agree with) and looking at cute cat videos on Facebook rather than learning what's going on in the world and how we might help make it a better place?

Carr doesn't look to blame anyone. "A free-market economy is moving to reallocate capital to its more productive uses, which happens all the time," he writes.

But then he points to our apathy. "It's a measure of the basic problem that many people haven't cared or noticed as their hometown newspapers have reduced staffing, days of circulation, delivery and coverage," he writes. "Will they notice or care when those newspapers go away altogether? I'm not optimistic about that."

We live in a culture where making money for investors supercedes creating a better society for everyone in the long-term. We'd rather build more prisons and live with a crumbling infrastructure than pay for education and help those living in poverty.

Our values are myopic, focused on our immediate desires instead of on the needs of our children or grandchildren.

Leaving newspapers and magazines to make it (or not make it) on their own is one more example of such myopic thinking. We'll all pay for it.

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

-sylvania restricted retail sales on Sunday. Many grocery stores were closed on Sunday because the owners believed it was wrong to ask someone to work on Sunday. Exodus 35:2 says: "For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a day of sabbath rest to the Lord. Whoever does any work on it is to be put to death." Obviously we read the Bible differently today because most grocery stores are now open for business on Sunday.

The apostle Paul had something to say about how we read the Bible. Until his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul believed Jewish law was indispensable and needed to be followed to the letter. In his book *Rabbi Paul*, Bruce Chilton says, "He continued to follow the Torah himself but believed that Gentiles could inherit the sonship that was Israel's gift to the world without accepting the Law."

I pray that we, like Paul, who could change the way he read the Torah and accept Gentiles into the church, can change the way we read the Bible and accept LGBT people into the church. *—Bob Wyble, Ephrata, Pa.*

What are the rules?

Is there not a specific rule about ordaining gay/lesbians in a committed relationship that is parallel to the explicit rule about performing same-sex weddings? I read the documents provided by the Executive Board in their release (August) and I understand that at least some folks would see the implication.

Like many of the commenters, I am quite concerned about the report from the Executive Board. If the board's position is that "rules are rules until the delegates change them," then we'd better be clear what the rules are.

I really am trying to understand. I will likely say more in the future and I want to have my facts right.

I am old enough to remember when ministers filling out personnel forms were explicitly asked to state which parts of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* resonated with them and which parts were less clear to them. The assumption was that no one agreed with everything. The *Confession of Faith* was adopted before the formal creation of Mennonite Church USA. This practice was followed in the General Conference Mennonite Church. Those of us with long memories (or who at least think we have long memories) go a bit nutty when strict adherence to the *Confession of Faith* becomes "the law of the land."—*George Lehman, Bluffton, Ohio*

Response from Terry Shue: The new polity handbook to update the *Mennonite Polity for Ministerial Leadership* is in print from MennoMedia. However, it is now a "working document" until the delegates in Kansas City approve it. *—Terry Shue, director for leadership development of Mennonite Church USA*

Amused

I was amused to read in Douglas Kaufman's interesting article "What Menno Got Wrong" (August), "This meant not only refusing sinners the Lord's Supper but also refusing to eat or even greet them." Refuse to eat them? Let's hope so.*—Jacob M. Tice, Newberry, Fla.*

Understanding Menno's contexts

Re Douglas Kaufman's article "What Menno Got Wrong" (August): Understanding Menno's contexts is vital for us since we are so far removed from his era. First of all, Menno carefully documented the history of the ban while pointing out that it was an alternative to the prevailing method of dealing with religious dissenters or transgressors: burning at the stake, drowning and/or torture. The ban, in contrast, he argued, always held the potential for a restoration of relationships in the church. He recognized that Jesus had many interactions with people who were at variance with his own faith positions and that in no case did Jesus call for a permanent break with any individuals or groups. In fact, according to Menno, Jesus' ministry demonstrated the opposite: a constar engagement with people who did not share his beliefs. So, even though Menno could explain and justify the ban, he was reluctant to exercise it.

So why did Menno sign the document of excommunication against the South German pastors? Early in his ministry, Menno was under the influence of Dirk Philips and the excomm nication document written by Dirk, who then pressured Menno to endors it. As the years passed, Menno acknowledged that this was the greates mistake of his ministry. Menno often addressed situations where Anabapti activities were reported to authoritie by (non-Anabaptist) spouses. In thos cases, he thought, some form of the ban might be appropriate, but he was not absolute about this, as the followi paragraph illustrates.

The Dutch Mennonites in Menno' time were divided into three factions Flemish, Frisians (Menno's heritage) and the Waterlanders. Menno worke diligently to bring these groups close together and encouraged compromis for the sake of a common mission. N all were eager to do so. One influenti Flemish leader in particular, Thielem J. van Braght, continued to be a stron advocate for the ban. In contrast, W terlanders were more accommodatin and opposed the ban.

In our day, the context has change and major denominations are no long practicing torture or the death penalt for transgressors in their midst. May it is time for Mennonites to review t gradual development of Menno's the ogy, Amman's second thoughts on ex communication, side with the Waterlanders and abstain from issuin the ban.*—Lauren Friesen, Chicago*

Response to 'No Papal Office'

I appreciate the careful explanation t Elizabeth Soto Albrecht and Ed Dille gave in their August letter in reply t my May letter questioning the design tion of the board's executive secreta as "Executive Director of Mennonite

(Continued on page 49)

Who makes the big decisions?

The church exists as a community of believers in the local congregation, as a community of congregations and as the worldwide community of faith.—Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective

During times of conflict and change, many of us turn naturally to leaders for support and direction. And particularly if we are concerned about the direction things are moving, we want to know who is in charge and how those leaders are being accountable to their constituents. Therefore, it seems only right to address the question of who is in charge of decision-making in Mennonite Church USA during a time of strong differences across our national church.

As indicated in the above quotation, "church" exists at several different levels. But in Mennonite Church USA, we give privilege of place to the local congregation. The Purposeful Plan says, "We are a network of congregations joined by a common set of core convictions and commitment to an Anabaptist perspective on Christian faith. Along with area conferences and other communities beyond the congregation, the national conference exists to help congregations do what they could not do on their own. For this reason, we might call these conferences and various organizations beyond the congregation 'supportive communities'" (lines 310-306). Further, it says, "We believe that congregations are the primary expression of God's work in the world. Following the lead of other fellowships of faith, we have also organized ourselves at the level of area conferences and a national conference" (lines 785-788).

So, while the majority of decisions about church life in Mennonite Church USA are made in local churches and area conferences, the Executive Board governs the decision-making and programmatic functions of our church at the national conference level. It does so with accountability to the delegates that meet in the biennial assembly of the denomination, a group that met most recently in Pittsburgh (2011) and Phoenix (2013). The board's accountability to the delegates is succinctly described in the following sentences from the Mennonite Church USA bylaws: "An Executive Board shall be organized to give leadership and act on behalf of the denomination when the Delegate Assembly is not in session. Executive Board members, with accountability to their appointing/electing bodies, are not expected to be representatives of specific constituencies but are to act in the best interests of Mennonite Church USA as a whole" (Article VI.1).

The role of the delegates is also spelled out quite clearly in the bylaws. Two of the most authoritative aspects in the list of delegate functions are stated as follows: "Discuss and decide major issues of policy for the national conference and discern the voice and the Spirit in the midst of the Delegate Assembly" (Article V.1.b) and, "Provide opportunity to speak to the establishment of general policies and the development of programs to carry out those policies" (Article V.1.c).

Since 1995, the delegates from General Conference Mennonite Church, Mennonite Church or (since 2001) Mennonite Church USA have adopted the documents that govern our denomination today. In the order of their adoption, they are *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, "Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love," The Plan of Merger (including Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws) and Membership Guidelines. More recently, the delegates gave considerable feedback regarding the content and use of the Purposeful Plan.

The bylaws adopted in 2001 gave the Executive Board authority to repeal or amend some aspects of the bylaws, but the delegates curtailed that authority in 2005. Now, the bylaws may only be amended "by a two-thirds majority vote of delegates voting at any regular or special session of the Delegate Assembly" (Article XI.1).

So, in short, my best response to the question posed in my title is that the duly appointed delegates to our national conference assemblies make the big decisions in Mennonite Church USA. In my next column, I will describe how I hope that happens at Kansas City in 2015. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

The duly appointed delegates to our national conference assemblies make the big decisions in Mennonite Church USA.

Mennonite Church USA

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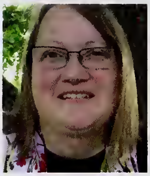
Welcome the stranger



Rebecca Helmuth

Since October 2013, more than 52,000 Central American children have been taken into custody as they crossed the border into the United States. So far, public outcry has been mixed. For some, these immigrants illustrate our government's failure to implement policy and adequately militarize U.S. borders; for others, these child-refugees epitomize a humanitarian desire for immigration reform and an immediate need for aid. For me, this represents a spiritual crisis: How can Christians faithfully follow Jesus if we turn our backs on this desperate situation?

My congregation—North Goshen (Ind.) Mennonite Church—is home to many South and Central American immigrants, some of whom are documented and some of whom are not. We have wept with members of our church family who experienced midnight raids on their homes because a concerned neighbor contacted authorities with a tip. We have stood helplessly by as families have been torn apart by deportation or the threat of detainment. With each frightening experience, the thick strata of loneliness, misunderstanding and degradation are brushed away, and we are left with human beings who want nothing more than to live and work and care for their families.

We have stood helplessly by as families have been torn apart by deportation or the threat of detainment.

Old Testament laws did a great job of caring for the stranger (Deuteronomy 1:16-17; 27:19), and repression of the stranger was denounced by the prophets. Jesus himself began life as a refugee (Matthew 2), and while he does not address the topic of immigration directly, his life was spent reaching out to the marginalized. So why do we Christians allow political histrionics, media rants and trivial analysis of immigration policy to guide our inaction? Why can't the Bible's simple words be enough for us?

Several years ago, a member of my congregation noticed a young Hispanic woman walking in the snow with a baby on one arm and holding hands with her 6-year-old daughter. He stopped and asked whether she needed a ride to the ele mentary school. She accepted the ride, and he soon learned that she lived more than a mile a He offered to make arrangements with the kindergarten teacher to drive the little girl to school each day. After several weeks, the girl's mother met the man at her door and asked whether it would be OK to come to his church Sunday. This man didn't stop on that snowy day invite the young mother to church. He didn't h an agenda other than to ease the family's burde and see the youngster safely to school. His actions were simple and thoughtful, yet we see them as heroic instead of commonplace. But is this the exact behavior Jesus expects of us?

My congregation has seen a steady influx of Hispanic members and regular attenders. The Clase de los Amigos Sunday school class is flou ishing. The church provides translation of the service each week, Scripture is read in both Spa ish and English, and music is a mixture of songs Spanish and English. There are Hispanic memb of the church in positions of leadership, and I ho more Spanish-speakers will feel encouraged to f low their example. But none of these elements my church would be possible without one perso willingness to open their arms in welcome.

Jesus cared for the stranger who came to him. He didn't question him, detain him or dep him. There are 52,000 strangers in fear of being sent back to countries where their lives are forfeit. There are more than 12 million additional strangers living in quiet fear of deportation in t United States—thousands of whom live in my community. When at last we love and care for t very people Jesus commanded us to care for an love, maybe then we will come to see the faces impacted by our nation's border policies and immigration reforms. Maybe then we will recogni the stranger Jesus spoke of and act as his advocate.—*rh*

A FORUM FOR THE VOICES OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA

TheMennonite

Following Jesus into prison

Sang-Min Lee, a South Korean Mennonite, is in prison because of his belief against serving in the military.

October 2014

www.TheMennonite.org

INSIDE:

- The persecution of Nigerian Christians
- Seeing our blindness
- Holding on to both ends
- *Boyhood* confronts us with questions
- The possibility of the impossible

Mennonite Health
Assembly

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With featured guest speaker

Jack Shea

Jack has been a leader in the integration of faith, spirituality, and values in the healthcare field for the last three decades.

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Shea will help us grapple with the uniqueness of being Christian and Anabaptist in an organizational context.

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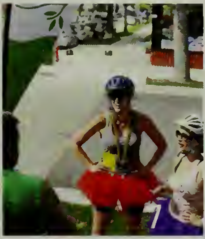

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ON THE COVER: Photo provided by Katelynn Johnston

TheMennonite
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Mennonite Church USA

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Food industry makes us fat

The film *Fed Up*, reviewed by Anna Groff (August), suggests that we should demonize the food industry for the rise in obesity rates because it manufactures food high in addictive sugar. If we demonize the food industry, do we also demonize churches that call for volunteers to prepare homemade pies to sell at fund-raisers for Mennonite Central Committee? Do we demonize churches that choose to serve homemade ice cream over strawberry shortcake during fund-raisers for MYF activities? Do we demonize churches that prepare homemade pastries for fellowship hour or to reward folks for attending congregational meetings?

Whether homemade or commercially made, tasty foods are part of our lives. Rather than attempting to get off the hook through blame, we can take personal responsibility for how we manage ourselves when tasty food is present. What portion size will I choose to eat? Or do I decline eating because I am not hungry now, even though food is available to me? How do I fellowship without gaining weight? Can I wait until I actually feel hungry to savor a small serving of homemade pie?

Overweight and obese people have something in common with the hungry: Each desires more food. Those of us who know where our next meal is coming from are challenged to acknowledge that we make food choices. What will they be?—*Beulah Hess-Yoder, Sherwood, Ore.*

Promises were made

A promise is being forgotten or ignore in the appeals to the *Confession of Fait in a Mennonite Perspective* as a basis fo denying membership or ordination to gays and lesbians in committed relationships. When the process of writing it began in 1984, this *Confession* was written to determine if the old Genera Conference Mennonite Church and th Mennonite Church could agree on a common statement of beliefs as the basis of merger. That purpose of the *Confession* was successful.

However, some people were concerned about the use of a confession a a means to exclude. Therefore, in the lead-up to adoption of the *Confession,* promises were made that it would not be used to exclude. To use modern terms, it was said that the *Confession* was to be used as a description but no a prescription of beliefs. And isn't this what is implied when the Introductio to the *Confession* states that it is a guide to the interpretation of Scriptu but is also under Scripture and that a written statement does not replace th lived witness of faith?

Thus, every time this *Confession* i appealed to as a norm or a teaching p sition or a foundational document in our current discussions about inclusi of gays and lesbians, as in the recent action of the Executive Board, the promise that it would not be used to exclude is being broken or forgotten ignored. People in leadership need to acknowledge and explain the move away from the original promise concerning use of the *Confession.—J. Denny Weaver, Madison, Wis.*

Asking for closure

Thank you for printing Wilma Shank' letter on John Howard Yoder. Finally someone is expressing views that many of us hold in regard to the atter tion given to Yoder. I am very sorry the women wronged have not found closure. There was a problem and it was dealt with by the church using the skills they had 20 years ago. Whether or not Yoder accepted the chastisement is not our concern. Mennonite Church USA should not be asked to continue to deal with issues the women cannot resolve. It would be wise for them to seek professional help. Closure will come only when they forgive Yoder and move on. Have they any idea how much pain they are inflicting on the Yoder family? Enough already.—*Ruth Horsch, Goshen, Ind.*

Forgiveness is the way to let go

Are we forgetting the Jesus way, so at odds with the Old Testament spirit of vindictive justice—"life for life, eye for eye, [abuse for abuse]" (Exodus 21:23-25)? Jesus proclaimed repentance and forgiveness: "Then [Jesus] said to [the woman whose sins were many], 'Your sins are forgiven.' … 'There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine [presumed] righteous persons who [presume they] need no repentance'" (Luke 7:47-48; 15:7).

Jesus literally commands that in order for me to be forgiven my wrongs, I need at the same time to forgive those who have wronged me, as Jesus himself forgave: "Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34)—and has asked us to forgive: "If you do not forgive others, then the wrongs you have done will not be forgiven by your Father" (Matthew 6:12, 14-15 NEB, Matthew 18:21-35, Colossians 3:13). We also are asked to forgive even those who have not requested forgiveness. Such forgiveness is difficult, as Carolyn Holderread Heggen notes in her fine volume, *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches*. Yet forgiveness is ultimately the only way for an individual to finally let go.

With forgiveness in mind, may the time of lament during our Mennonite Church USA Convention (August) be a time of "weeping with those who weep," who have experienced the physical/emotional abuse of myriad abusers, many of whom have not repented. But may nobody single out, scapegoat and so abuse vindictively one specific person, such as John Howard Yoder, who has already been disciplined, who repented, apologized publicly and was again accepted back into fellowship, for whom we rejoice (Luke 15:7). "Let the one who is without sin among you be the first to cast a stone at him."—*Leonard Gross, Goshen, Ind.*

Where is the coverage?

I'm seeing reports that Kiev's "anti-terrorist" operation in the east has collapsed and the separatists have moved south and west toward Mariupol and Berdyansk. This suggest that the lands formerly occupied by Mennonites is now under separatist control. What about the Mennonite Center in Halbstead? We U.S. Mennonites could sure use some coverage of these events in the Mennonite press (http://vineyardsaker.blogspot.com/). Note that what comes out of Kiev these days is not taken seriously by informed people. It bears little resemblance to reality. But then that has been true from the beginning (Feb. 22), hasn't it?—*Berry Friesen, Lancaster, Pa.*

Inspired by *The Mennonite*

What a varied and good selection of articles (September)! I hesitate to mention any: the witnessing Goshen (Ind.) College student group working in Palestine—not wanting to ignore others such as the cover story article, or the regular columns: Global Anabaptism, Mennonite Church USA, Grace and Truth, News Briefs; and it is important to be calling us to action and prayer for Gaza. There is so much to

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

Back in May, we received a suggestion to cover the compelling story of Sang-Min Lee, a young Mennonite from South Korea. He was sentenced on April 30 to 18 months in prison for refusing to fulfill his obligatory military service.

"There was a flurry of social media support around the time of his trial and sentencing, mostly involving Bearing Witness, Mennonite World Conference and Justapaz in Colombia," wrote the cover story author Elizabeth Miller.

After his sentencing, a letter-writing campaign launched. Lee has spent five months in prison so far and has received letters from Canada, the United States, Colombia, Chile and the Netherlands. We are pleased that the cover story this month offers our readers an option to get involved by joining the letter-writing campaign. See page 15 for details.

Some of you may remember the Mennonite Board of Missions' Out-Spokin' ministry, which began in the late 1960s. This ministry revolved around bike hikes that offered space for young adults to discuss faith. See pages 16-21 for content from the Mennonite Church USA Archives about Out-Spokin', including many fun photographs.

It is nearly impossible to avoid news about terrorism in the Middle East and Muslim extremists. Eastern Mennonite Missions receives many questions regarding how to respond to Islamist terrorism and relate to Muslims. We open our news section (pages 32-33) with a spread on EMM's Christian/Muslim Relations Team statement, "Confessing the Peace of Jesus in a Terrorist World."

Our new website will launch by the end of this month. We will introduce the site with more details in the November issue. Please stay tuned. —*Editor*

Mennonite churches in Canada receive new children's Bible

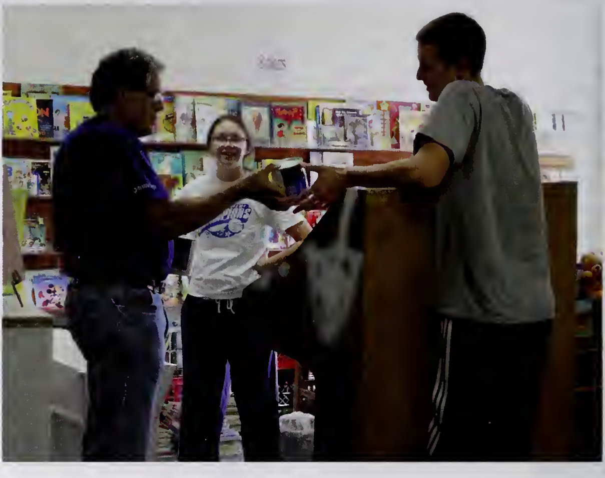
HARRISONBURG, Va., and KITCHENER, Ont.—A donor has made it possible for Mennonite Church Canada to send a copy of *Shine On: A Story Bible* to every Mennonite congregation in Canada.

Conversation about reprinting the new story Bible was already under way, but this order for 227 copies sent the new children's Bible into a second printing. The order includes copies of the Spanish-language version, *Resplandece*, for two Spanish churches.

Shine On is part of the new *Shine* Sunday school curriculum for ages 3 through grade 8. *Shine* officially launched in congregations across Canada and the United States on Aug. 31, so the *Shine On* reprint came even before its first Sunday of planned use.

Craig Anderson, sales and marketing manager at MennoMedia's office in Kitchener, says, "Our hope is that children will be blessed and challenged by hearing, seeing and living with God's Word in a way that speaks especially to them, not only at church but at home."

Hilda Hildebrand, moderator of Mennonite Church Canada says, "God's Word itself is a gift. In *Shine On*, all these gifts point to God's greatest gift to us, Jesus."—*MennoMedia*


Bluffton University

Bluffton University students serve

Lawrence Matthews (left), adviser to SERVE, a Bluffton (Ohio) University service group, hands a can of paint to Owen Lugibihl while Bailey Short looks on Sept. 16 at Book ReViews, a Bluffton bookstore. Lugibihl, a Bluffton junior from Pandora, Ohio, and Short, a first-year student from Archbold, Ohio, were among 20 student SERVE volunteers who painted, washed windows and organized shelves and books at the Main Street business for several hours. Book ReViews sells donated books and magazines, among other items, and gives most of its profits to support the worldwide relief work of Mennonite Central Committee.—*Bluffton University*

MDS response in Staten Island closes two years after Hurricane Sandy

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y.—Two years after Staten Island was devastated by the winds and water of Hurricane Sandy, Mennonite Disaster Service closed its project site on the island. During the two years of MDS response, over 1,400 volunteers cleaned up debris, mucked out homes, then rebuilt and restored homes and hope.

A celebration and closing ceremony was held on Aug. 27 at the St. Charles Seminary building, where MDS was housed for 20 months. Representatives of partner organizations, clients and volunteers celebrated the work and the restoration of hope for many.

Kevin King, MDS executive director, thanked the many volunteers who coordinated the response.

Homeowner Rebecca Pellicano said, "The people that I met helped bring me back home, not just to (my house) but back into the arms of God."—*MDS*

Bridgefolk focuses on service at conference

COLLEGEVILLE, Minn.—Meeting at its spiritual and institutional home, the 13th annual Bridgefolk conference was held July 24-27 at Saint John's Abbey under the theme "Service: An Overflow of Christ's Love."

Bridgefolk is a movement of sacramentally minded Mennonites and peace-minded Roman Catholics who come together to celebrate each other's traditions, explore each other's practices and honor each other's contribution to the mission of Christ's church.

Keynote speakers were Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, moderator of Mennonit Church USA and professor at Lancaster (Pa.) Theological Seminary, and Vince Guider, director of the North Lawndale Kinship Initiative at Old St. Patrick's Church in Chicago.

Next year's conference is planned for Aug. 20-23 at Anabaptist Mennonit Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., on the communion of saints.—*Bridgefolk*

Student document receives national award

GOSHEN, Ind.—FiveCore Media and the Goshen College Communication Department received a national bronz Telly Award for *Breaking Down Barriers: Journeys of the Apostle Paul*, a docu mentary filmed and produced by Goshen College students and faculty.

The award-winning documentary tells the story of how the Apostle Paul overcame religious, cultural and physical obstacles as a leader of the first generation of Christians, and guides viewers on the path Paul took through Greece and to Rome. The 30-minute program was made into a DVD that has received worldwide distribution and a TV program that has aired in the central Indiana region.

FiveCore Media is a video production company located in Goshen, comprised of creative professionals and a group of Goshen College communication students. FiveCore Media writes, produces and edits videos, including commercials, promotional and informational videos.—*Goshen College*

Larry Bartel

Hesston College holds service week

Hesston (Kan.) College freshman Brooke Hammond (Long Island, Kan.) serves ice cream to Schowalter Villa residents at a music program by the Hesston College music department during the college's Service Week Sept. 9-15. Students took part in 20 service projects throughout the week, including several with neighboring Schowalter Villa. Other projects included participating in recreational art and activities at Youthville in nearby Newton, picking up trash along the highway and serving meals at The Lord's Diner in Wichita, Kan.—*Hesston College*

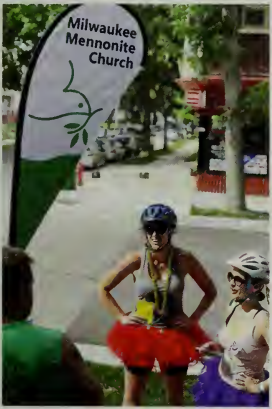


Photo provided

Church hosts bikers

Milwaukee Mennonite Church hosted a bonus checkpoint that involved making school kits for area schools and having cyclists write encouraging letters to kids for their first day of school. Riverwest, a Milwaukee neighborhood, hosts an adventure-packed 24-hour bike ride each July. At "bonus checkpoints" cyclists earn points by performing certain tasks, answering questions or being challenged in some fun way.—*Rebecca Keiser*

Speech winner encourages discussion at the 'welcome table'

AKRON, Pa.—Abby Deaton, a senior at Goshen (Ind.) College, won first prize in the 2014 C. Henry Smith Oratorical Contest. Her speech was titled "The Welcome Table: Discussing Goshen College's hiring policy."

The annual event, open to students in Mennonite and Brethren in Christ universities and colleges in Canada and the United States, is administered by Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

The top three speakers receive scholarships to attend a peace-related conference or seminar as well as cash prizes, with $300 for first place.

In her speech, Deaton, who is from Indianapolis, lamented that Goshen College excludes people in same-sex relationships from employment and expressed hope for more inclusive policies in the future. She acknowledged the difficult journey that would be required to make the change.

Deaton noted courage she has witnessed that is "fueled by love." She prays for such courage for all "to stand not against those they disagree with, but with those they disagree with"; to hear both sides and "to no longer see sides"; and "to invite everyone to the welcome table."

The 2014 second-place winner in the contest was Seth Stauffer, Lebanon, Pa., a senior at Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va. His speech was titled, "The Danger of MCC's Own Single Story." Stauffer received a $225 cash prize.

The third-place winner, whose cash prize was $150, was Mary Schrag, Moundridge, Kan. Schrag is a senior at Bluffton (Ohio) University. She gave a speech titled, "Shooting Chivalry."
—*MCC U.S.*

Responding to pain

Sara Dick is pastor at Shalom Mennonite Church in Newton, Kan.

Last winter, walking to school one icy morning, my then-fifth grader slipped and fell on the ice—twice in half a block.

The first time, she bounced right back up. The second time she took just a little longer to get on her feet again. Then, after limping along for a few more steps, she just sat down on the sidewalk and waited.

She waited for the pain in her bruised knees to diminish. And when it had, she got up and finished the walk to school. "It always hurts the most at first, and it doesn't really hurt now," she said when she got up. As she walked the final block by herself, I heard the 10-minute bell ring. She had enough time even with her pause.

Hers was such a perfect response to pain: rest, assess, recover, move on. If she had needed a cast or a bandage, that would have been part of her recovery and would have taken longer. In this instance, though, all she needed was a little time on the ground.

Hers was such a perfect response to pain: rest, assess, recover, move on.

When we adults are in pain, how do we rest, assess and recover so that moving on can happen well?

Come October, we in the middle of North America limp into a recovery phase from summer's heat, breakneck growth and back-breaking labor. I imagine myself resting more as autumn's nights lengthen, letting my back-to-school attention relax and giving way to dreams of spring: new gardens, adventures and celebrations of resurrection.

In reality, though, October can be even more harried than September: more sporting events, more exams, more reports, more meetings, more performances, more harvest festivals. The tardy bell seems always about to ring, recess is long in coming, and we're stuck hanging out on the sidewalk nursing our bruised knees.

After chastising those who ignore his call to repentance, Jesus says, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

Christ desires our healing and restoration as individuals, families, churches, communities, nations and our whole planet. But true rest is hard to come by, God knows.

In our workaday lives, weekends come and go sometimes leaving us more tired than when Friday evening arrived. And vacations? Those can drain the sap right out of us. Time away from our jobs or studies is not necessarily restful.

Besides, I often try to sidestep pain by distracting myself from it even when I do have the time. I don't think I'm alone in this tendency, if our society's addiction rates are any indication. Whether through food, drink, gambling, sex or shopping, distraction runs rampant, leaving us no time to rest.

Still, Christ desires our healing and restoratio as individuals, families, churches, communities, nations and our whole planet.

Look at Ferguson, Mo. People there experienced deep pain after the death of Michael Brown in early August. Some people literally sat down o the sidewalk to assess the damage and begin the recovery. But people's pain is often accompanied by anger, as it was for many in Ferguson, which makes rest difficult and maybe even inappropriat So some people stood on the sidewalks and protested this young man's death.

Christ desires healing and restoration for all residents and officers in Ferguson even in the midst of protests and counter-protests.

"Come to me … and I will give you rest."

At the church I serve, worship includes two one-minute times of quiet (not silence, since babies and coughers aren't banned) for reflection o the Scripture or sermon we've just heard. The goal of everyone present is the same—to be a faithful and vibrant church—but we have differen clocks by which we measure our time "on the sidewalk." For some, those two minutes are the most excruciating of the whole service.

For others, though, those quiet moments allo them to rest in God's presence, even though we know God is present on sidewalks and in cars an in stores and schools and offices, too. During 60 seconds of quiet rest, one can begin to assess the week's trials and joys and begin to recover a sense of belovedness and mission to carry into the coming week.

We might even hear anew Christ's promise: "Come to me … and I will give you rest." TM

The persecution of Nigerian Christians

Christ is just like the human body. … If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it. … You are the body of Christ and parts of each other.—1 Corinthians 12:12a, 26-27, CEB

On the night of April 14, armed men associated with the radical Islamic group Boko Haram, stormed the dormitory of a Christian school in the northeastern Nigerian town of Chibok and forced some 230 girls into a convoy of trucks before disappearing into the dense forest along the Nigerian-Cameroon border.

For a time, the story of the abduction dominated the news. Now, six months later, the plight of the kidnapped girls and the larger context of violence against Christians in Nigeria has nearly faded from memory, nudged aside by reports of new atrocities elsewhere in the world. Yet the story of suffering in Nigeria should not be forgotten, especially by Mennonites.

One detail rarely reported in the news is that a disproportionate number of the victims of violence in northeastern Nigeria—including the majority of girls abducted on April 14—are members of the Church of the Brethren (CoB). Founded in Germany in 1708, the CoB's history is intertwined with groups in the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition. Like Mennonites, the CoB practice voluntary baptism, emphasize service and, as one of the so-called Historic Peace Churches, support Christian nonviolence and peacemaking.

The CoB has had a mission in northeastern Nigeria since 1923, with a strong emphasis on schools, clinics, hospitals and agricultural development. In 1972, the CoB church—known locally as the Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN)—became an independent denomination, with its own indigenous leadership. Since then, the group has grown to a membership of nearly 200,000, with estimated attendance of 1 million, making it the largest CoB national body in the world.

Although the abduction of the EYN schoolgirls in Chibok last spring captured global attention, the incident was part of a much larger pattern of persecution the EYN has endured for nearly a decade. In a recent plea to the United Nations, Samuel Dante Dali, EYN president, begged the world to take note of the suffering of EYN church members "who are being slaughtered, abducted, enslaved and reduced to sexual objects." Since 2009, at least 1,500 EYN members have been killed. Some 1,941 houses and properties—including more than 100 EYN churches—have been burned or bombed. The church has been forced to close five of its districts, and thousands of EYN families are among the 150,000 Nigerians who have been displaced by the violence.

In 1748, a radical branch of the Church of the Brethren living in a monastic-like community in Ephrata, Pa., undertook the enormous task of translating and publishing the first German edition of *Martyrs Mirror*. In the centuries that followed, the gift of that text from the CoB had a profound impact on the emerging identity of Mennonites in North America.

As I have followed the EYN story over the past few months, I have been deeply moved by the way their responses to persecution has echoed the themes of *Martyrs Mirror*.

Like the Anabaptists, EYN church leaders have called their members to the holy discipline of nonviolence, even as other Christians have participated in retaliatory raids against Muslim mosques and homes.

Like the Anabaptists, EYN members have responded to their suffering in song. Virtually every church has an active women's choir whose singing, according to EYN member Zakariya Musa, is a central part of worship. Singing makes people feel "refreshed and liberated." When people sing, she continues, "they tend to forget their sorrows—the violence, killings, destructions and threats—and open up joyfully together under the roof in worship."

Like the Anabaptists, the EYN church—along with its global family—is committed to the practice of prayer. Recently, dozens of CoB congregations throughout North America united for a week of sustained prayer and fasting on behalf of the brothers and sisters in Nigeria, sharing with the Psalmist their voices of their lament, despair, trust and hope.

In the 17th century, Mennonites living in the Netherlands took note of the suffering of their Swiss Brethren cousins by sending fact-finding delegations, raising funds for refugee relief, making direct appeals to government authorities and carefully recording the names and stories of those who were being persecuted. As heirs to that tradition, Mennonites in North America should be attentive to the current plight of the Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria. TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

Like the Anabaptists, EYN members have responded to their suffering in song.

On McDonald's, climate change rhetoric and pennies

With so many interesting articles out there, I've decided to touch on several topics, rather than just one. You can check out the magazines they come from to get the fuller stories.

In his article "Dignity" (*The New Yorker*, Sept. 15), William Finnegan writes about the growing movement to bring higher wages to fast-food workers. He focuses on a McDonald's on Broadway at West 18th Street in New York City.

Most of the workers there make minimum wage, which is $8 in New York City, and receive no benefits. "Rosa Rivera," Finnegan writes, "a grandmother of four who has worked at McDonald's for 14 years, makes $8.50." Add to that, nearly everyone is part-time and doesn't know, from week to week, when they will work.

Fourteen of the employees have joined Fast Food Forward, the New York branch of a growing campaign to unionize fast-food workers.

Finnegan goes into great detail about this local story but also adds a broader perspective. He notes that according to a Berkeley-University of Illinois study, "American fast-food workers receive almost $7 billion a year in public assistance." In other words, American taxpayers are helping subsidize McDonald's, including their executives.

According to Demos, a progressive think tank, "fast-food executives compensation packages quadrupled, in constant dollars, between 2000 and 2013," Finnegan writes. "They now take home, on average, nearly $24 million a year."

Climate change rhetoric: In the September issue of *The Atlantic*, Charles C. Mann writes on "How to Talk About Climate Change So People Will Listen." In the course of his long article, he reviews eight books from various perspectives on climate change.

Mann juxtaposes environmentalists who warn us that apocalypse awaits with economists who tell us that minimal fixes will get us through. When people hear about the calamity in Antarctica that will affect their descendants in 2100, they often let it go over their heads. "Americans don't even save for their own retirement," Mann writes. "How can we worry about such distant, hypothetical beings?"

He also criticizes economists' easy solutions: "To say that a global carbon tax is a simple answer is like arguing that the simple answer to death is repealing the Second Law of Thermodynamics."

Other authors propose geo-engineering solutions that involve "tinkering with planetary systems we only partially understand," Mann writes.

One of these solutions involves spraying the stratosphere with tiny droplets of sulfuric acid that bounce sunlight back into space, reducing the Earth's temperature.

The advantage of this is that it's cheap. But it also has many problems. "The sulfur would soon fall to Earth" and could kill thousands of people every year. And "the carbon dioxide that was already in the air would remain."

Mann concludes that "unless we find a way to talk about climate change, planes full of sulfuric acid will soon be on the runway."

Pennies: OK, full disclosure: I don't like pennies, and here's why: they're wasteful. *Time* (Sept. 22) reports that the U.S. Mint lost $55 million in 2013, when the zinc-alloy penny cost 1.83 cents to manufacture.

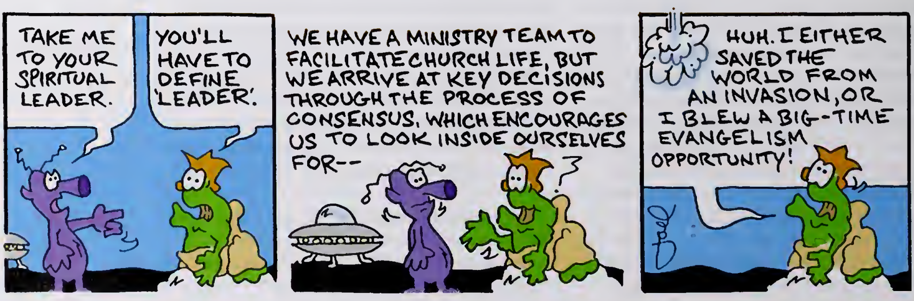
That Lincoln-head coin in your pocket cost almost double its worth to make. So let's stop making them. And let's stop using them.

We've done it before. The half cent was in circulation in the United States from 1793 to 1857. The British got rid of its halfpenny more recently, in 1969.

This is perhaps not as big an issue as climate change or fair wages, but why not save $55 million per year? And that cup of coffee for $1.03? It's now $1.05. And you're no longer bothered by those pesky coins.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


TAKE ME TO YOUR SPIRITUAL LEADER.
YOU'LL HAVE TO DEFINE 'LEADER'.
WE HAVE A MINISTRY TEAM TO FACILITATE CHURCH LIFE, BUT WE ARRIVE AT KEY DECISIONS THROUGH THE PROCESS OF CONSENSUS, WHICH ENCOURAGES US TO LOOK INSIDE OURSELVES FOR--
HUH. I EITHER SAVED THE WORLD FROM AN INVASION, OR I BLEW A BIG-TIME EVANGELISM OPPORTUNITY!
Joel

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> “The suffering comes from our reluctance to learn to walk in the dark.”—Barbara Brown Taylor in *Learning to Walk in the Dark*

8 historical oddities

1. Betty White is older than sliced bread.
2. Harvard University was founded before calculus was invented.
3. The last time the Chicago Cubs won a World Series, the Ottoman Empire still existed.
4. The Pyramids of Giza were built in the time of wooly mammoths.
5. The fax machine was invented the same year as the Oregon trail migration.
6. The jewelry store Tiffany & Co. was founded before Italy was a country.
7. France was still using the guillotine when *Star Wars* came out.
8. Two of President John Tyler's grandsons are still alive.—*Huffington Post*

Texas minister sets himself on fire to protest injustice

One Monday in June, 79-year-old Charles Moore, a retired United Methodist minister, drove to Grand Saline, Texas, his childhood home town some 70 miles east of Dallas. He pulled into a strip mall parking lot, knelt down on a small piece of foam and doused himself with gasoline. Then, witnesses said, he set himself on fire.

Bystanders rushed to help, splashing him with bottled water and beating the blaze with shirts. Finally, someone found a fire extinguisher. Unconscious, he was flown to Parkland Hospital in Dallas, where JFK died. Moore died that night, June 23.

In his letters, obtained by *The Washington Post*, he called his death an act of protest. He said he felt that after a lifetime of fighting for social justice, he needed to do more.

“I would much prefer to go on living and enjoy my beloved wife and grandchildren and others,” he wrote, “but I have come to believe that only my self-immolation will get the attention of anybody and perhaps inspire some to higher service.”

Moore had “a conviction that if the Bible stood for anything, it stood for radical inclusiveness,” the Rev. Sid Hall, a former colleague, told the *Dallas Morning News*. “If you ever were on the side of powerlessness, if you were ever on the margins yourself and were looking for someone to help you, Charles was the person.”

Moore wrote, “I am laying down my life here today in order to call attention to issues of great human concern.” He seemed particularly disturbed by capital punishment, racial discrimination, prejudice against the LGBT community.

Moore explained that his death was not an impulsive act but one to which he had given great thought.—*The Washington Post*

Groups dropping fossil fuel investments

Worried about global warming, a growing number of churches and other faith groups are divesting their holdings in fossil fuel companies, which release large amounts of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. “The warning in Scripture that ‘the wages of sin is death’ could not be more literally true than it is in the case of fossil fuels,” said Serene Jones, president of New York's Union Theological Seminary. —*Religion News Service*

How to save money on the homeless

For every $1 spent providing housing and support for a homeless person with severe mental illness, $2.17 is saved on hospital, prison and shelter costs, according to a study by the Mental Health Commission of Canada. The study enrolled 2,148 homeless people with mental health issues in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montreal and Moncton. Of the half who received housing first, 72 percent had stable housing after two years, compared with 34 percent who received usual treatment.—*Mennonite Brethren Herald*

Numbers to ponder

- Percentage of U.S. female CEOs who are overweight: **10**
- Of U.S. male CEOs: **65**
- Estimated portion of sex crimes in U.S. jails and prisons that are committed by correctional officers: **1/2**
- Rank of homicide among causes of on-the-job death for American women: **1**
- Chance that a U.S. woman under age 35 has a tattoo: **1 in 2**
- Chance that a U.S. man under 35 does: **1 in 4**
- Chances that the word "pushy," when used in U.S. media, is used to describe a woman: **2 in 3**
- Percentage of professional journalists who were college graduates in 1971: **58**
- Who are today: **92**
- Number of local-government jobs lost since 2010: **351,000**
- Portion of those jobs that were in education: **3/4**
- Percentage change since 2002 in the average annual income of a recent college graduate: **-8**
- In the average debt load from student loans: **+70**

—*Harper's*

Following Jesus into prison

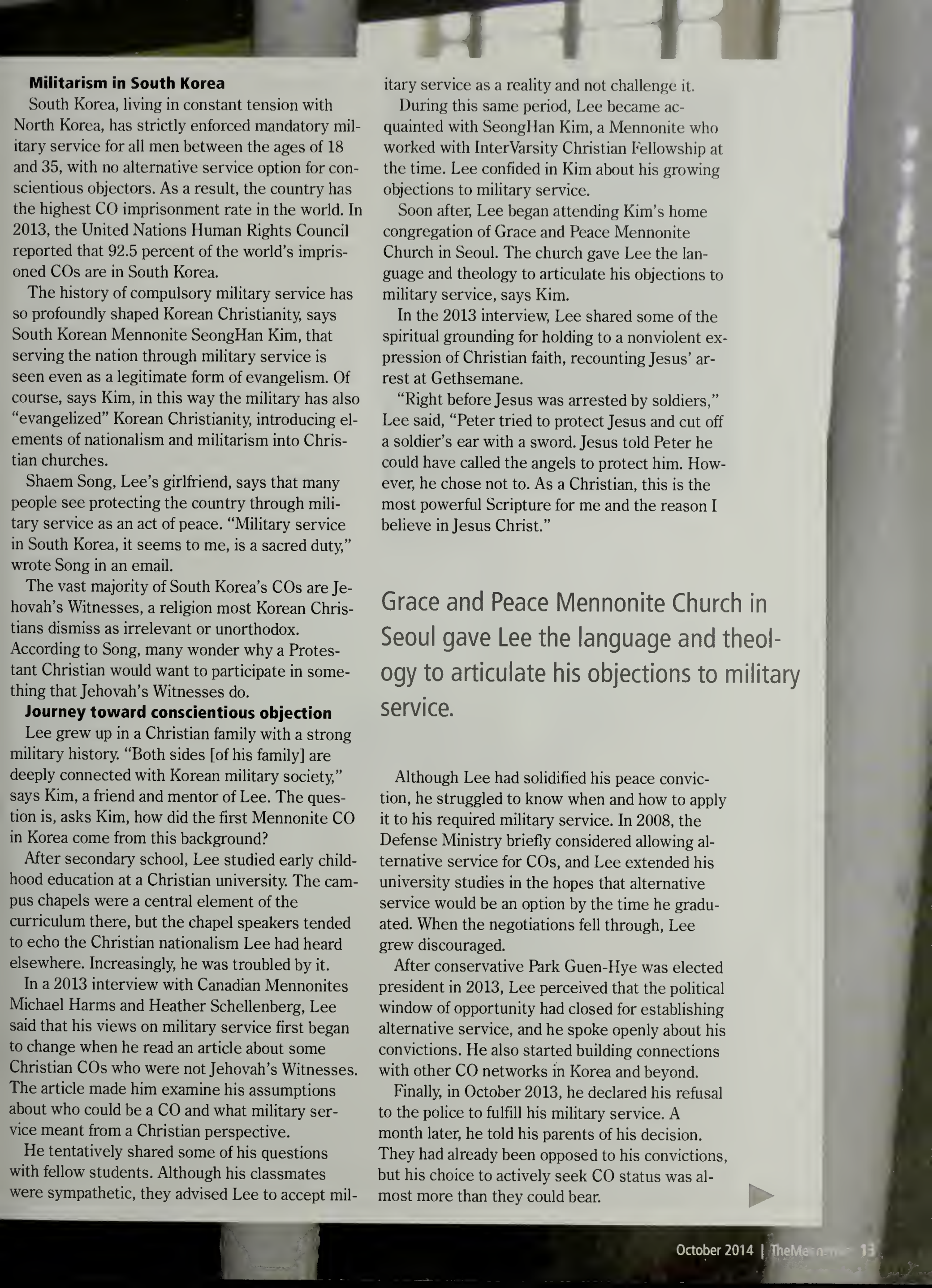
Sang-Min Lee, a South Korean Mennonite, is in prison because of his belief against serving in the military.

by Elizabeth Miller

Jae Young Lee, left, the director of the Korea Peacebuilding Institute and a fellow member at Sang-Min's church, Sang-Min Lee and Karen Joy Spicher, Jae Young's wife, and their daughter. Photo provided

In October 2013, Sang-Min Lee, a young South Korean Mennonite, called the police to announce that he was a conscientious objector and would not fulfill his mandatory military service. Following his trial six months later, Lee was taken from the courtroom directly to prison and subsequently became the first Mennonite conscientious objector in South Korea.

Shelby Steward / creativecommons.org



Militarism in South Korea

South Korea, living in constant tension with North Korea, has strictly enforced mandatory military service for all men between the ages of 18 and 35, with no alternative service option for conscientious objectors. As a result, the country has the highest CO imprisonment rate in the world. In 2013, the United Nations Human Rights Council reported that 92.5 percent of the world's imprisoned COs are in South Korea.

The history of compulsory military service has so profoundly shaped Korean Christianity, says South Korean Mennonite SeongHan Kim, that serving the nation through military service is seen even as a legitimate form of evangelism. Of course, says Kim, in this way the military has also "evangelized" Korean Christianity, introducing elements of nationalism and militarism into Christian churches.

Shaem Song, Lee's girlfriend, says that many people see protecting the country through military service as an act of peace. "Military service in South Korea, it seems to me, is a sacred duty," wrote Song in an email.

The vast majority of South Korea's COs are Jehovah's Witnesses, a religion most Korean Christians dismiss as irrelevant or unorthodox. According to Song, many wonder why a Protestant Christian would want to participate in something that Jehovah's Witnesses do.

Journey toward conscientious objection

Lee grew up in a Christian family with a strong military history. "Both sides [of his family] are deeply connected with Korean military society," says Kim, a friend and mentor of Lee. The question is, asks Kim, how did the first Mennonite CO in Korea come from this background?

After secondary school, Lee studied early childhood education at a Christian university. The campus chapels were a central element of the curriculum there, but the chapel speakers tended to echo the Christian nationalism Lee had heard elsewhere. Increasingly, he was troubled by it.

In a 2013 interview with Canadian Mennonites Michael Harms and Heather Schellenberg, Lee said that his views on military service first began to change when he read an article about some Christian COs who were not Jehovah's Witnesses. The article made him examine his assumptions about who could be a CO and what military service meant from a Christian perspective.

He tentatively shared some of his questions with fellow students. Although his classmates were sympathetic, they advised Lee to accept military service as a reality and not challenge it.

During this same period, Lee became acquainted with SeongHan Kim, a Mennonite who worked with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at the time. Lee confided in Kim about his growing objections to military service.

Soon after, Lee began attending Kim's home congregation of Grace and Peace Mennonite Church in Seoul. The church gave Lee the language and theology to articulate his objections to military service, says Kim.

In the 2013 interview, Lee shared some of the spiritual grounding for holding to a nonviolent expression of Christian faith, recounting Jesus' arrest at Gethsemane.

"Right before Jesus was arrested by soldiers," Lee said, "Peter tried to protect Jesus and cut off a soldier's ear with a sword. Jesus told Peter he could have called the angels to protect him. However, he chose not to. As a Christian, this is the most powerful Scripture for me and the reason I believe in Jesus Christ."

Grace and Peace Mennonite Church in Seoul gave Lee the language and theology to articulate his objections to military service.

Although Lee had solidified his peace conviction, he struggled to know when and how to apply it to his required military service. In 2008, the Defense Ministry briefly considered allowing alternative service for COs, and Lee extended his university studies in the hopes that alternative service would be an option by the time he graduated. When the negotiations fell through, Lee grew discouraged.

After conservative Park Guen-Hye was elected president in 2013, Lee perceived that the political window of opportunity had closed for establishing alternative service, and he spoke openly about his convictions. He also started building connections with other CO networks in Korea and beyond.

Finally, in October 2013, he declared his refusal to the police to fulfill his military service. A month later, he told his parents of his decision. They had already been opposed to his convictions, but his choice to actively seek CO status was almost more than they could bear.

Sang-Min Lee
Photo provided

Lee's status will give him a criminal record and a bad reputation in broader society for the rest of his life, a reality further complicated by his role as his parents' only son, a position that carries significant responsibility in Korean culture. As Lee puts it, "What kind of parents in this world would like to see their child go to prison?" Thankfully, his relationship with his parents has improved since Lee's sentencing, and they even visited him in prison in June.

Lee's status will give him a criminal record and a bad reputation in broader society for the rest of his life.

International connections

As Lee's April trial date approached, his story circulated outside South Korean Mennonite circles. Late in 2013, Harms and Schellenberg sent Lee's video interview to their Mennonite connections back in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The story was picked up by *Canadian Mennonite* and shared more broadly. In March, Grace and Peace Mennonite Church in Seoul formed a support group for Lee that included establishing an accompanying Facebook group with over 200 members.

Mennonite World Conference also publicized Lee's case, and letters of support and prayers on Lee's behalf came from all over the world as the trial date neared. In addition, Jae Young Lee, a member of Grace and Peace and the director of the Korea Peacebuilding Institute, sent out regular updates to international supporters leading u to and during Lee's trial on April 30.

Grace and Peace Mennonite Church and the support committee that had formed in Seoul wer committed to supporting Lee in the case of imprisonment, but there was some concern that th outpouring of international support would fade away after the trial.

Through Mennonite World Conference connec tions, John D. Roth, director of Goshen (Ind.) Co lege's Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism (ISGA), began conversations with Jenny Neme, the director of Justapaz, a Colombia Mennonite peace and human rights organization based in Bogotá, Colombia. Both Roth and Neme were interested in somehow extending support t Lee throughout his time in prison, finally decidin that a letter-writing campaign would be most effective.

One of the ISGA's initiatives, the Bearing Witness Stories Project, is an effort to collect storie of suffering faith from around the world, but the project also raises awareness of situations of costly discipleship today, offering support when possible. In this way the Bearing Witness Storie Project seemed the perfect platform from which to organize a letter-writing campaign for Lee.

Justapaz, in turn, was founded by the Colombia Mennonite Church in 1990 surrounding issues o conscientious objection in Colombia. Although Justapaz's scope has broadened since then, the o ganization continues to advocate for a clear conscientious objection option in the face of mandatory military service in Colombia.

After Lee was sentenced to 18 months in priso at his April 30 trial, the letter-writing campaign was launched, with ISGA and Justapaz promotin the campaign in their respective regions.

Lee is now in the fifth month of his prison ter and so far he has received letters from Canada, the United States, Colombia, Chile and the Netherlands. Even if no more people sign up for the campaign, Lee will receive over 70 letters from individuals and churches throughout the course of his imprisonment.

'This story is not only his story'

The interest that Lee's story has sparked within global Anabaptist networks testifies to its ability to capture the faith imagination of a wide variety of people. As Kim says, "This story is no only his story; it also services the discussion of

Christians in other contexts. What is the meaning of peace in this current situation?"

Although Lee's story, with all its particular nuances, is his alone, it has somehow transcended national and language differences to inspire and challenge the faith of a broad swath of people. Even more surprising is its ability to connect widely disparate members of the global Anabaptist community outside formal institutional structures.

Since entering prison, Lee has felt at peace about his decision. Jae Young Lee believes the prison term itself may actually be easier for Sang-Min Lee than the years of wondering and waiting that preceded it. Challenges will remain after Lee's term is up, however, and he may have difficulty in finding work and stability given his status as a CO.

Yet his story has already made a difference for others, inspiring new conversations about conscientious objection and Christian peace conditions more broadly. Next year, for example, the Mennonite World Conference Assembly will use South Korea as one of a number of country case studies for a series of workshops on conscientious objection and global advocacy.

The mystery of Christian community continues to unfold, as Lee's story is woven together with others around the master story of Jesus of Nazareth, who could have called on angels to defend him but chose to go to the cross instead.

Lee's story has already made a difference for others, inspiring new conversations about conscientious objection and Christian peace conditions more broadly.

Elizabeth Miller is a member of Berkey Avenue Mennonite Fellowship in Goshen, Ind.

Sang-Min Lee
Photo by Katelynn Jonston

To write to Sang-Min Lee:
(153-600)
Seoul Guro-gu,
Geumcheon Post
Office Mail Box
164, # 2139
South Korea
Mr. Lee Sang Min.

For the letter campaign, go to www.martyrstories.org/co-letter-campaign/

Mennonite Church USA

Archives

Mennonite Church USA Archives

Collecting, sharing, and preserving stories of Mennonite Christian discipleship

- The Mennonite Church USA Archives are located in North Newton, Kan., in the Bethel College library, and in Goshen, Ind., in Newcomer Center at Goshen College.
- Each year, the Archives host several hundred researchers in person and answer about 1,000 reference questions for in-person and remote researchers.
- In the past year, the Archives' approximately 7,200 photographs available online have received more than 4.2 million views.
- Among the researchers are students, historians, theologians, pastors, documentary researchers, genealogists, former mission workers and people whose lives have been touched by Mennonites.

See: http://www.mennoniteusa.org/what-we-do/historical-archives/

Out-Spokin'

Pedaling toward Christian community, 1967–1982

I wonder if people questioned the future of youth and young adult ministry when the Mennonite Board of Missions' Out-Spokin' ministry began in the late 1960s. This ministry was fresh and outside the box. It deviated from the norm. Its sanctuary was filled with birds, trees, the open sky—not pews or chairs set in rows. There were no "experts" on biblical scholarship; people shared personal stories about questions, encounters and testimonies o God's presence. People shared potlucks of peanut butter sandwiches, and community was not a place one joined but something that was created together. Still, despite the different form and function, people's lives were changed and they encountered Christ.

The story of Out-Spokin' makes me wonder what new Spirit-breathed ministries will develop and be created in our day. The i-generation is looking for authenticity and a sense of belonging—for true community. While they are a bit skittish about institutionalized religion, they still find themselves drawn toward spiritual matters. How might our churches need to shift and change, to think outside the box and work toward creating community in places outside our church doors? Are we willing to be so nimble and bold—trusting the Spirit to guide our steps—to reach and connect with a generation that longs to be known in nontraditional ways? Are we open to feeling the rush of the Spirit blowing through us, awakening us to new possibilities and ministries, like the rushing wind of bikes racing by? *—Rachel S. Gerber, denominational minister of youth and young adults, Mennonite Church USA*

From 1967 to 1982, thousands of young Mennonites participated in long-distance bike trips under the leadership and guidance of Out-Spokin'. An outdoor ministry of the former Mennonite Board of Missions (of the former Mennonite Church), Out-Spokin' provided young people an opportunity to get to know themselves, each other and God in an unfamiliar, physically demanding and sometimes emotionally trying context: the "bike hike." Bike hikes took youth and young adults away from the comforts of home, family and friends and challenged them to create "a Christian community on wheels" during the days and weeks they traveled together.

What did a bike hike involve? Pedaling, worship, more pedaling, singing songs and playing games, more pedaling, morning quiet time, more pedaling, helping serve or clean up after meals, more pedaling, group devotions, more pedaling, setting up and packing up camp, more pedaling, praying together and more pedaling. But this list of activities cannot sum up the experience of a bike hike. The following pages juxtapose photographs and quotations from the Out-Spokin' records housed in the Mennonite Church USA Archives in Goshen. We invite you to look and "listen" to the voices of Out-Spokin' and find out what young Mennonites learned on the way to Christian community. Enjoy the ride.—*Colleen McFarland, archivist, Mennonite Church USA Archives*

An orange flag helped increase biker visibility and keep riders safe.

Bike hikes were safe spaces for discussing faith. Riders were encouraged to share both their sources of inspiration and their doubts with each other. All photos from Out-Spokin' Records, 1967–1983. IV-034. Mennonite Church USA Archives – Goshen. Goshen, Indiana. Quotations from Out-Spokin' Records and Jess Kauffman, *A Vision and a Legacy: The Story of Mennonite Camping, 1920–1980* (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1984).

What happens on the hike depends on you and God—not staff and bikes.
—Out-Spokin' Introductory Speech

Out-Spokin' recognized the importance of including all Mennonite youth in its bike hikes. A 1976 proposal sought funding to investigate how to increase participation of people from underrepresented racial/ethnic backgrounds in bike hikes and to pilot bike hikes specifically for them.

Goals of Out-Spokin':

- To have a Christian encounter
- To share Christian experiences with others
- To become better equipped to contribute to local church or gro
- To have good invigorating fun

—*Christian Community on the Move … A Manual for Planning Group-Oriented Biking and Hiking Experiences*, 1982

What I enjoyed most was evening devotions. Sitting on the ground after a day's work, singing praises and listening to God's Word was great. Knowing that God was with us and saw us through another day was well worth the trip.
—Wanda

Youth from North Clinton Mennonite Church, Wauseon, Ohio, secure the tent on the Out-Spokin' trailer.

The Out-Spokin' trailer accompanied most bike hikes, carrying food and equipment, providing meeting space for staff and giving shelter to bike hikers. The trailer is pictured here at Deer Park, N.Y.

My relationship with God needs to be based on the same fundamentals as in this group—openness, honesty and the reality of myself.
—Anonymous

How does biking change lifestyles? Mix together 24 completely different people who will need to work together as a team, whether they like it or not. Add unavoidable circumstances like extreme physical stress, the unbiased whims of chance and Mother Nature, and the human experiences of confrontation and cooperation along with consolation and celebration. Add devotional input regarding the differences between being a Christian and not being one. Mix for seven weeks, and allow God to work.—*Les Engle, Out-Spokin' devotional leader, quoted in* A Vision and a Legacy: The Story of Mennonite Camping, 1920–80.

Humility was never one of my strong points. Christ brought me here to get myself in proper perspective.
—Anonymous

Every rider had to pitch in to keep the entire group well fed, well rested and on the road.

Bikes at rest in Colorado.

"I saw miracles, some little and some big, in the lives of persons. I saw a caring community, uniting in a common cause. People from varying backgrounds and value systems came together and formed a community with love and caring for one another.—*Jerry Miller, Out-Spokin' director, quoted in* A Vision and a Legacy: The Story of Mennonite Camping, 1920–80.

I changed a lot of my opinions since the hike, and I don't let my friends influence my life because thanks to God I can now think for myself (with help sometimes). I'll never be sorry for going, for it changed my whole life.—Anonymous

The main thing I got from the trip was an impression of peace that the people there had. Several people, especially one particular staff guy, positively glowed. Two years later, when I decided there was a God and started looking for him, I remembered the peace they had and how real it all was to the people on that bike trip, and largely because of this I began to look into the Bible.—Greta

Keep on
Bikin'!

A "tailpatch" and a matching orange flag helped increase biker visibility and keep riders safe.

More photographs may be viewed on the Mennonite Church USA Archives' Flickr site: https://www.flickr.com/photos/mennonitechurchusa-archives/

giagir / creativecommons.org

Seeing our blindness

Reflections on John 9

by John C. Murray

In our culture and even in our religious expressions it is our answers that are celebrated and heralded. However, our awareness that we don't have all the answers inspires lifelong learning. Henry David Thoreau is quoted as asking, "How can we remember our ignorance, which our growth requires, when we are using our knowledge all the time?"

The answers we cling to not only can inhibit continued growth but can fuel conflict and animosity. Patrick Henry (not the early American patriot but the modern day theologian) once wrote, "If I had to be sure all the time, I would despair. If I were sure all the time, I would be a menace to myself and to everyone around me."

What the religious leaders in John 9 knew pushed them to the edge of being a menace to those around them. It seems the only thing they didn't know for sure was whether it was the blind man or his parents who had sinned and had caused him to be born blind. They knew that one of them had sinned. Surely the man's blindness was God's punishment for whatever sin had been committed.

They knew the Scriptures and the doctrines they had derived from their interpretation of the Scriptures. They knew the religious rituals and traditions that had been passed down from generation to generation. They knew the law and the punishments that were prescribed for breaking the law. They knew God.

They were not blind. They could see.

Anything that didn't fit what they already knew was quickly rejected, viewed as dangerous and destructive. Anything that didn't fit what they already knew filled their hearts with such fear that they couldn't even celebrate the blind man's healing. Instead the healing stirred arguments among them. The healing fueled expressions of condemnation so oppressive that even the parents of the man who was healed distanced themselves from their own son rather than celebrate with him.

Their fear of what was outside what they knew led them to proclaim Jesus a sinner. Righteous people would not heal on the Sabbath. Righteous people don't walk as far as the pool of Siloam on the Sabbath or encourage others to do so. Righteous people don't make mud on the Sabbath. Jesus was guilty. His hands were dirty. They could see the mud on Jesus' hands.

The biggest hindrance to new insight, new understanding and a deeper awareness of God's presence and activity in the world is what we think we already know.

If that was a challenge to the Pharisees in Jesus' day, it is surely a challenge to those of us who live in the "information age," the "age of knowledge." We have more information and data at our fingertips today than we have ever had in all of history.

Pico Iyer wrote in a *New York Times* op-ed piece on March 21: "Humanity now produces as much data in two days as it did in all of history until 2003." When I first read that, I doubted the validity of the statement. Then I pondered the reality of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Wikipedia, blogs, newsfeeds and the myriad other digital information systems that allow individuals from around the globe to contribute to the expanse of available information.

We have gotten used to having so much data and are so used to knowing every detail that it is incomprehensible to us that a Boeing 777 airplane can go down in a remote region of the Indian Ocean and we not know what happened or where it is. In news reports of the anniversary of the Boston Marathon bombing people questioned why we didn't know in advance what these two brothers were going to do.

Ironically, it seems that the more information we have available the more dismissive we are of any information or experience that doesn't fit with what we already know. Iyer quotes Noble Prize winning psychologist and economist Daniel Kahnemann, "It is our nature to overestimate how much we understand the world. It is our folly to assume that we know very much at all."

The biggest hindrance to new insight, new understanding and a deeper awareness of God's presence and activity in the world is what we think we already know.

That is Jesus' warning to the Pharisees when he says at the end of John 9, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

This is why I am personally, deeply committed to provide leadership to a confessional church rather than a creedal church. A creedal church says, "This is what we know." A confessional church says, "This is what we think we know, but we might be wrong. Even if we are right, we are most assuredly incomplete." At best, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13, all we see is a dim reflection in a mirror.

The problem with assuming that we see more clearly and completely than we actually do is not simply that we don't learn anymore or that our errors are uncorrected. A deeper problem is how that attitude impacts the people around us. As mentioned earlier, the Pharisees' attitude stirred such fear in the hearts of the healed man's parents that they refused to stand with their own son.

I also wonder how the attitude of the Pharisees impacted the man born blind himself, not just in this moment but throughout his years of growth and development. He grew up as one who was condemned by those around him. He was unacceptable, unworthy, punished by God. He had been rejected by those who knew, those who could see, those who understood. He was viewed as unclean by those who wanted everyone to know that they didn't have any dirt on their hands.

> I hope we are willing to get our hands dirty and risk our own rejection for the sake of those who live in condemnation.

I pray that we as a church are not followers of the Pharisees but followers of Jesus. I hope we are willing to get our hands dirty and risk our own rejection for the sake of those who live in condemnation.

I suspect that we all know what it feels like to be the blind man in this story. We are aware of our own limitations and challenges. Perhaps we even wonder if the challenges we face are punishments for our failures. We are fearful of rejection and have often experienced rejection by the words and actions of those who think they know.

The good news in John 9 is that Jesus is willing to get his hands dirty, touch our eyes with mud and invite us to wash, bringing us healing and hope. When we struggle to understand the healing that has happened to us, Jesus continues to seek us out, walking with us even when others reject the healing we have experienced. Jesus leads us beyond healing to the experience of loving embrace.

The pool we are invited to wash in is named "Siloam," which means "sent." Not only are we given new insight and understanding, we are given purpose and a calling. We are invited to share the story of our journey so that those who think they know have the opportunity to see the limits of their knowledge and discover something new.

Our world and our own nation are filled with embittered political and religious rhetoric that is divisive. The results have ranged from broken relationships to political gridlock to the violence of warfare. We in Mennonite Church USA seem tempted to follow the culture into these practices with speech and actions that divide families, congregations and conferences.

Many have responded to this divisive reality by striving for clearer articulation of what they know to be true. Each seems convinced this additional information is important both for the defense of their position as well as to convince the other to embrace their understanding.

Perhaps the way through these difficult realities is not through new information and clearer articulation of what we know but by a renewed embrace of our ignorance. Bill Vitek and Wes Jackson in their introduction to *The Virtues of Ignorance* ask, "How might we interact differently in the world, if we began every endeavor and conversation with the humbling assumption that human understanding is limited by an ignorance that no amount of additional information can mitigate? Might we be more cautious and more willing to listen to others?"

Perhaps there are more important things than being right: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, gentleness, self-control and humility.

If we acknowledge our blindness, perhaps we will find forgiveness. As long as we are sure that we can see, I suspect that our sin will remain.

John C. Murray is pastor of Hesston (Kan.) Mennonite Church. This article is adapted from a sermon originally preached at Hesston Mennonite Church on March 30.

Get up!

by Matthew Morin

In Mark 10:17-21 we are witnesses to a remarkable encounter. A man has met Jesus on the road and has an important question: "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

The man seems sincere, certainly polite. His address—"Good Teacher"—pays proper deference to Jesus. And unlike some of the scribes and Pharisees who tried to trap Jesus with trick questions, this man's question is straightforward.

"Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus turns quickly to rebuke the man: "Why do you call me good? No one is good. God alone is good."

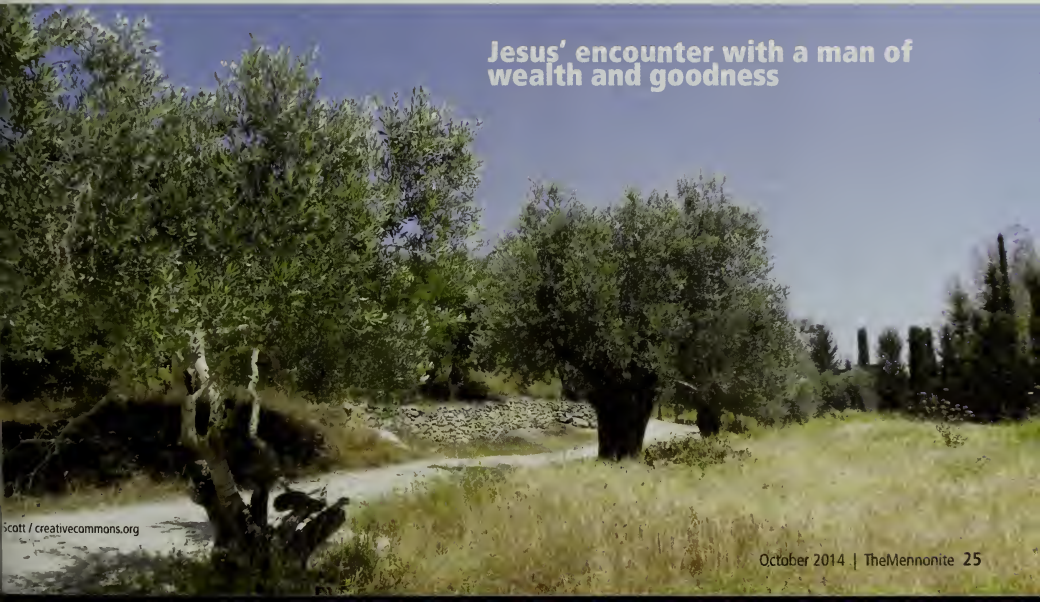
At first, this strikes us as strange, even a bit harsh. Surely the man was just showing respect.

"Nobody is good," Jesus insists. "God alone is good."

For the polite, sincere, pious man, Jesus's rebuke is not easy to hear. He simply cannot accept it. He blurts out in protest: "But Teacher, I have kept all the commandments since I was a young boy."

There is a strong sense of security in seeing oneself as good. The man is deeply attached to the idea of his own holiness, and it feels risky to accept Jesus' teaching.

After all, who is he without the list of com-



Jesus' encounter with a man of wealth and goodness

Scott / creativecommons.org

mandments that he's worked his whole life to keep?

Do we confess God's holiness, or do we insist on our own holiness—and the corresponding unholiness of other people?

Who are we without our goodness?

Do we, the churches of Mennonite Church USA, believe that God alone is good? If so, what does that mean for our current denominational dialogue? Is this belief reflected in our disagreements—or do we seek moral high ground over and against one another? Do we confess God's holiness, or do we insist on our own holiness—and the corresponding unholiness of other people?

Our encounter continues with verse 21: "Jesus, looking at the man, loved him and said, 'Get up!' "

Most of our English translations here say, "Go." But a much better way to translate that is "Get up!" The Greek word occurs several times in Mark's Gospel, and it is a healing verb.

In chapter one, when Jesus heals a leper, he says, "Get up, and show yourself to the priest."

In chapter two, when Jesus heals a paralyzed man, he says, "Get up, take your mat and go home."

In chapter five, when Jesus heals a demon-possessed man, he says, "Get up, tell your friends what the Lord has done."

Or again in chapter five, when Jesus heals a woman suffering from a severe hemorrhage, he says, "Get up!"

And here in chapter 10, the exact same word is used: "Jesus, looking at the man, loved him and said, "Get up!"

Jesus loves this man far too much to leave him alone with his self-deception. Jesus intends to heal this man from the sickness of self-righteousness.

Get up! Be healed! But how?

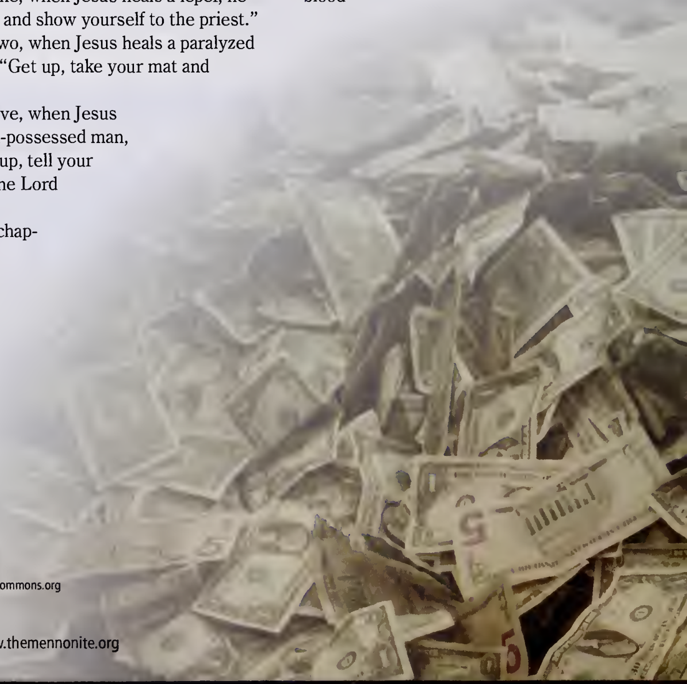
"Sell all that you own, give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; then come follow me. … For the man had many possessions."

Aha, so this is a rich man—which means this is a powerful man. Now things are coming more int focus. Now we can see why Jesus was so insisten upon the confession that "God alone is good."

Because any time you have moral discourse, any place you find the good separated from the bad, you also find the temptation to reward the good and punish the bad. Indeed, the bad ones must be identified and removed, precisely by and for the sake of the good ones.

Claims to moral goodness become excuses t exercise power over other people.

Prisons in the United States testify to this very fact. The blood



Nick Ares / creativecommons.org

of foreign enemies cries out from the ground to show what happens when the self-righteous impulse becomes institutionalized.

And the blood of Jesus—the one identified as unrighteous by powerful religious men—Jesus' blood testifies to the violent power of the self-righteous impulse.

Two thousand years ago, the body of Christ was broken by and for good people. Today, the body of Christ is broken—divided—by and for good people.

Wealth is another way power is exercised over bodies. In fact, wealth is not just a means of exercising power but is itself power. Wealth is a system of power.

In the popular imagination, wealth and goodness are produced by one another; indeed, they are the same. Isn't it so? In the United States, aren't the wealthy—more or less—the honored? And as this country continues to exalt the goodness of the rich man, doesn't it also willingly surrender power into that man's hands?

Are we not witnessing an increasing dependence on wealthy men for work, for housing, even for food? And aren't we witnessing an increasing dependence on wealthy men for donations to civic projects, nonprofit organizations, even schools?

And don't we ultimately tolerate this concentration of wealth and power because we trust the goodness of these men?

On the flip side, isn't poverty just what you get when you make bad choices in America? And isn't jail time just what you get when you make bad choices in America?

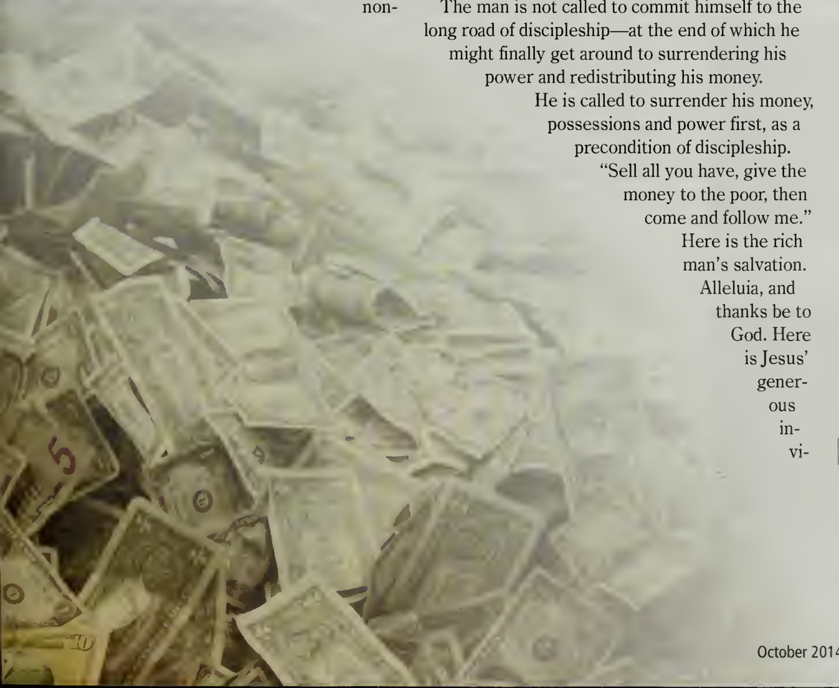
You cannot have the concentration of power without wealth and goodness.

Are we really to believe that a wealthy, self-righteous, powerful man will be able to enter into the right kind of relationship with Jesus?

And so Jesus takes his axe right to the roots of these two trees with one simple confession: "God alone is good," and one simple command: "Sell all you have, give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come and follow me."

Note well, the sequence of Jesus's command: "Sell all you have, give the money to the poor, come and follow me."

The man is not called to commit himself to the long road of discipleship—at the end of which he might finally get around to surrendering his power and redistributing his money. He is called to surrender his money, possessions and power first, as a precondition of discipleship. "Sell all you have, give the money to the poor, then come and follow me." Here is the rich man's salvation. Alleluia, and thanks be to God. Here is Jesus' generous invi-



tation. Here is God's grace. Here is the good news.

For this man, how could it be any other way? If salvation is—as U.S. Evangelicals have rightly said for decades—a "relationship with Jesus," then how is salvation possible, except in this way?

Are we really to believe that a wealthy, self-righteous, powerful man will be able to enter into the right kind of relationship with Jesus:

- the peasant from a nowhere town in Galilee,
- son of a manual laborer,
- homeless, troublemaking riff-raff,
- jailed as a criminal; killed to protect good people?

In making people equals, Jesus restores to them the possibility of true friendship.

Is something like a genuine relationship, a true friendship between these two men, even possible?

Or won't the rich man basically enter into relationship with Jesus in the same way he relates to everyone else—that is, as the boss? As the respected one? In control?

Not maliciously of course. Not because he explicitly intends to control Jesus, but because that's the only way he knows how to live. That's his socially wired default setting. That is who the man has been taught to be—the boss, the one in control of relationships.

And it is this way of being in the world that makes salvation almost impossible. It is this learned way of being in the world that makes it almost impossible to call Jesus "friend"—let alone Lord.

Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone like this young man to enter the kingdom of God.

This again is not easy to hear. It is not easy to believe. I suspect that many of us simply don't believe it—just as the disciples could not believe it.

Verse 26: "They were greatly astounded and said to one another, 'Then who can be saved?' "

"Jesus," they ask, "if this guy can't be saved, then who can?" This man is no thief; he's no criminal. He's a good man. Do you really expect him to surrender his wealth and power?"

Jesus looked at them and promised in the fullness of his grace: "Yes. With God, this and all things are possible."

Back in June, the churches of the Central District Conference gathered for our annual meeting Our conference theme was "Transformed Through Text and Table." As I reflect on this theme in light of the passage from Mark 10, I am convinced that "Transformed Through Text and Table" is really a shorthand way of saying that we are:

- transformed through the people with whom we read the text;
- transformed through the people with whom we share the table.

We are not simply transformed through the biblical text, as if all I need is me and my Bible. That's the fundamentalist error.

Likewise, we are not simply transformed through the table, as if all I need is me and my sacrament. That's the high church error.

Rather, if I would be transformed, I must read the text and share the table with the right people And that is precisely why Jesus, in Mark 10, attempts to separate a powerful man from his wealth and self-righteousness. For in making people equals, he restores to them the possibility of true friendship.

To quote the prophet Isaiah, Jesus raises up every valley and brings low every mountain. Or a the Apostle Paul says in the letter to the Ephesians, Jesus breaks down every dividing wall in his flesh.

This is good news—especially for people who have lived on the wrong end of power disparity fo a long, long time.

Matthew Morin worships with Milwaukee Mennonite Church. This piece is excerpted from a sermon he gave at the 2014 Central District Conference gathering.

Correction: Earl Sears (September, page 28) is a member of Willow Spring Mennonite Church in Tiskilwa, Ill.

Mennonite World Conference Assembly Buzz

Pennsylvania
2015

Will we meet you at PA 2015?

Basic Facts and Information

You are warmly invited to join your sisters and brothers from around the world at the next MWC Assembly, PA 2015. The global event will be held July 21-26, 2015, at the PA Farm Show Complex and Expo Center in Harrisburg, PA. The theme for the event? "Walking with God."

- **Each day**—begins and ends with singing, led by a multi-national worship team.
- **Each morning**—stimulating meditation; response by a young adult; fellowship and discussion with a small, multi-cultural group you'll be part of for the whole week.
- **Each afternoon**—workshops; performances, exhibits, visiting in the Global Church Village; service opportunities; sports events; tours.
- **Each evening**—testimonies, prayer, times of encouragement.

PA 2015 includes a children's program and a youth program (ages 12-17).

"An experience of Jesus we can't fully replicate in our own congregations ... a taste of heaven as we worship and fellowship in many languages and cultures."

Registration for "Pennsylvania 2015" Now Open!

Go to:
mwc-cmm.org/pa2015registration

Delegates will come from around the world to find consensus.

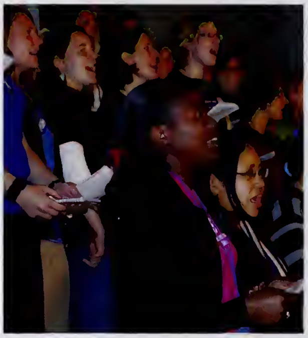
Inspiration and wisdom from leaders from all continents will be part of each day's worship time.

Music and Inspiration from Everywhere!

A definite highlight of the Assembly. Begin and end each day with singing as part of a global chorus.

In the morning, learn stirring songs from around the world, led by the Assembly singers and instrumentalists. In the evening, sing those songs—along with other favorites—with an arena full of international sisters and brothers.

Hear choirs from around the world, too. And don't miss musicians in the Global Church Village each afternoon.



Seminars and Workshops

Between 160 and 200 workshops and seminars will be offered during the week. Many to choose from each day.

Topics will include living faithfully in difficult settings, drawing support and wisdom from each other despite our distances, practicing hope.

Other seminars and workshops will address interfaith conversations and encounters, conflict and reconciliation within congregations, Anabaptist spirituality.

One workshop each day will go in-depth with the morning speaker.

Workshops and seminars are the ideal place to explore issues with a relatively small international Anabaptist group, who are all interested in and connected to the questions raised.

gys 2015 18+

The Global Youth Summit is a gathering of young adults ages 18-30, being held July 17-19 (four days before the Assembly) at nearby Messiah College.

"An oasis for young leaders of the church," meeting together around the theme, "Called to Share: My Gifts, Our Gifts."

Bring your challenges and questions, your story, experiences, and testimony. Go home with new energy, new ideas, and a global network of prayer partners and co-workers in Christ.

For information and to register, go to: www.mwc-cmm.org/gys

Young adults will gather at the Global Youth Summit for inspiration and fun.

Are we American Mennonites capable of true hospitality?

We Americans have given ourselves a test. We've invited our Anabaptist sisters and brothers from around the globe to a massive reunion in our country—Mennonite World Conference's upcoming Assembly, "Pennsylvania 2015."

I've had a nagging worry about all of this ever since our invitation was accepted. And it isn't that I'm afraid we won't be able to pull off the logistics.

I'm wondering if we can find it within ourselves to be fully hospitable, to offer hospitality of the heart to these "relatives" of ours whom we really don't know very well.

If you've spent any time in Mennonite, Mennonite Brethren, or Brethren in Christ homes in other parts of the world, you've likely experienced extravagant hospitality. I don't mean extravagant accommodations. I'm talking about those extraordinary welcomes we've received from hosts who give us days of time in the middle of their work weeks, never mind their over-burdened lives. Who give us their own beds. Who prepare bountiful meals that tax their own resources. Who ask us about our lives, our fears, our joys, and then listen with true interest.

When we went to the MWC Assembly in Zimbabwe, we hoped to catch a quick lunch with a couple from Bulawayo we knew. They were tied up full-time as Assembly volunteers and had Assembly guests staying in their home. But they insisted that we come to their home for dinner.

They welcomed us with a full meal, despite the food shortages, and lots of wonderful visiting. Later we learned their oldest son was in the hospital, where they went early each morning to feed him. Their grief and uncertainties simply lived alongside their hospitality.

The author with Emelia Amexo of Ghana.

Becoming hospitality apprentices

We North Americans may have more material resources or education than many of our guests, tempting us to assume that we will be the givers, acting from a superior position. But money and degrees and economic security aren't an automatic advantage when we're considering true hospitality.

I've come to believe that when we offer authentic hospitality, we make room within ourselves for the other person—and for the unexpected. We lay aside our opinions, we stop being possessive of our time. And we become open to receiving. We come to believe we have something to learn.

What if . . . ?

What if we saw this coming Assembly as a chance to become apprentices in hospitality?

What if we became free to replace the guilt we sometimes feel with humility?

What if this event offered us the grace to practice openness rather than the urge to impress?

What if we sat down to eat with sisters or brothers who speak little or no English? They're our guests, so why not? Think about what they've risked to come here.

What if we extended hospitality by attending the entire Assembly, entering fully into the spirit of the event, coming humbly each day to see what we might learn from others who share our convictions? What an absolutely un-American act it would be to set aside our insistence on multi-tasking, our captivity to our heavy schedules, our electronic devices, and our apparent belief that our jobs are more important than this international festival of faith.

What if we risked opening our lives to this wide and wonderful gift from God—welcoming these visitors by refusing to fill every space and silence between us with words? Who knows, maybe our guests might be preparing to ask us a penetrating question, offer us a blessing, or invite us into their hearts and worlds?

We may become more hopeful, feel less discouraged and alone, and gain some lifelong friends in faith.

Phyllis Pellman Good is a writer and editor for Mennonite World Conference. She lives in Lancaster, PA.

What can you do?

- Register and attend PA 2015.
- Volunteer.
- Join the Prayer Network.
- Support the Assembly fund individually or as a congregation so people from all parts of the world will be able to attend.

To learn more, go to mwc-cmm.org/pa2015

Small Groups a New Feature

Is it possible to attend an Assembly of several thousand people and have a meaningful conversation with someone from elsewhere in the world whom you didn't know before?

Following each morning's worship service, everyone attending will join a multi-cultural group of 15-20 people for fellowship and a discussion on the morning theme.

The same groups will meet all week long—a great opportunity for visiting and discovering new relationships.

"Assembly *Scattered*" Opportunities

MWC Assemblies come with many parts. Two of them are "Assembly *Gathered*" and "Assembly *Scattered*." ("Assembly *Gathered*" will happen in Harrisburg, PA, July 21-26.)

"Assembly *Scattered*" is the opportunity for guests from North America and around the world to visit MWC-related churches and their ministries on their way to PA 2015 in Harrisburg, or during their return home. These visits provide opportunity for guests to engage with members of local churches and get a taste of the diverse, North American church through fellowship, worship, learning about community concerns, touring historic and cultural sights and sharing meals together. For more information and to find out the various "Assembly *Scattered*" locations, please go to www.mwc-cmm.org/assemblyscattered

"Assembly *Scattered*" sites include –

- "Walking with God in the City and the Wilderness: Anchorage, Alaska."
- "Fun and Fellowship with Pittsburgh (PA) Mennonite Church."
- "Mennonites, Monuments, and African American History in Washington, D.C."
- "Diverse Anabaptist Communities in Miami (FL) Metro Area."
- "DOOR San Antonio (Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection) in Partnership with San Antonio (TX) Mennonite Church."
- "Mennonite, Mennonite Brethren, and Brethren in Christ Churches in the Pacific Region."

Tours for Everyone

Registrants for PA 2015 can choose from 47 tours. Ten full-day tours will take place on July 20. Choose to visit NYC, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Lancaster County.

During the Assembly, 37 half-day tours will be offered—from historic Underground Railroad locations to an Old Order Mennonite meetinghouse.

Global Village Every Day

The Global Church Village, inside the Farm Show Complex, will be a natural meeting point during PA 2015.

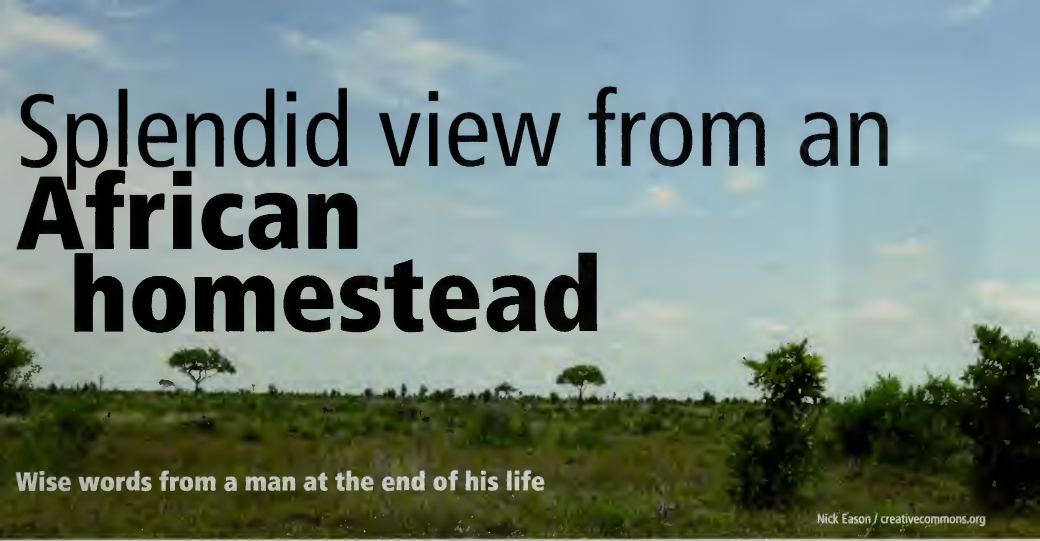
A stage at its center will feature international and local artists—musicians, actors, storytellers—performing live each afternoon and following evening services.

Churches from each continent will have displays. Snacks will be available!

Relaxed setting for easy visiting.

"Like" our Facebook page for the latest news — www.facebook.com/MennoniteWorldConference

Splendid view from an **African homestead**



Wise words from a man at the end of his life

Nick Eason / creativecommons.org

by Jonathan Larson

They'd told me not to expect much. The old man, now well into his 90s, was failing, they said. But I thought it best to call on him anyway, a traditional courtesy between African friends. The route led me off the highway to a small settlement in the hills, amid thorny acacia, hard on the Zimbabwe border. There I found him, John Tshwene, my one-time language teacher and cultural mentor, sitting in the winter light by the shambles of his homestead.

When I opened the gate, I called to him in greeting, "How have you risen?"

He squinted toward me, shading his eyes from the glare, and answered in raspy wonderment, "I have risen well. Is it you, Father Proverbs*?"

"Indeed, I have come to pay you honor after too long."

As we set out to wander the paths of our friendship, a refrain announced itself. "It was splendid," he observed. When we spoke of mutual friends, of travels and shared work, there it was again: "It was splendid." Even of unfulfilled dreams he paused and said in teacherly voice, "It was splendid." In our hour of repartee and laughter, it must have recurred a dozen times, "It was splendid."

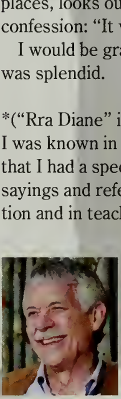
Though my researcher's notebook lay open in my lap ready for the rush of impressions, deft details and quotes, when I returned it to my leather satchel and bid my friend goodbye, it bore only a single line to mark our conversation: "It was splendid."

A dignified African gentleman, of advanced years and failing health, whose village home lies on the barbed-wire border of troubled places, looks out over a lifescape and makes this confession: 'It was splendid.'

And it has haunted me all the way home, even as I sit musing now beneath southern pines in Georgia. A dignified African gentleman, of advanced years and failing health, whose village home lies on the barbed-wire border of troubled places, looks out over a lifescape and makes this confession: "It was splendid."

I would be grateful to be "failing" in this way. It was splendid.

*("Rra Diane" in Setswana) is the name by which I was known in Botswana, since people observed that I had a special interest in their traditional sayings and referred to them often in conversation and in teaching.



Jonathan Larson and James Krabill are working on a book about Mennonite partnership with African Initiated Churches.

Finding a new song

Rachel Swartzendruber Miller
is vice president of admissions at Hesston (Kan.) College.

Let's push ourselves as leaders, parents, mentors and friends not to run from our struggles so we may learn to face them and discover what God would have us see.

I am typically not one to take life lessons from country music radio. However, a popular song by Miranda Lambert has caught my attention. The song, "Automatic," describes a societal shift 30 years in the making. This shift has taken us from hard work to immediate gratification, saving our pennies to having things handed to us, waiting our turn to pay to swiping a credit card.

Lambert laments that everything has become easy and automatic instead of requiring time, hard work and perseverance. One of her central messages is, "When everything is handed to you, it's only worth the time put in." I agree. We have moved from manual to automatic, and it's not getting us anywhere.

As the vice president of admissions at Hesston (Kan.) College, I work with prospective students and their families. Opening Weekend is the best part of my year. We watch families arrive on campus and help them unpack their cars. We also witness an amazing transition begin to take place in students' lives. However, within these happy moments I see signs that the college transition has been impacted by this societal shift.

I began college roughly 15 years ago. My parents traveled to Hesston with me and helped me unpack and set up my room. They attended the parents' orientation events and campus worship services. Then, at the end of the weekend, they wished me well and left. They knew college was a transition I would have to navigate. They knew I would have lonely moments. They knew I was scared, overwhelmed and intimidated—but they left me anyway. They left me because they knew I needed to learn how to persevere, function on my own, and, most of all, rely on God for comfort and direction.

In the last few years, I have noticed parents doing many of the same things my parents did, although in some situations they choose an alternate ending to Opening Weekend. After the suitcases are unpacked and the orientations are over, some parents allow for an event in addition to the weekend schedule, a moment when their son or daughter can decide to stay or return home. This moment wasn't on my schedule 15 years ago because the option didn't exist. When a son or daughter experiences the same feelings I had as I transitioned to college (scared, overwhelmed, intimidated) there is a new "automatic" option: to return home with their parents.

As I watch this take place, I wonder how returning home helps our children discover there are struggles worth "the time put in" and worth persevering through? How does this help us rely on God? Instead of using examples like waiting on sun tea to turn, or waiting three days for a letter in the mail, perhaps Lambert should have used the example of waiting on God to get us through, trusting that Christ Jesus is with us in our trials and offers us the strength to persevere.

This example also highlights issues facing our leaders and our church. When struggling through a tough budget year, a family crisis, a church disagreement or an employee who doesn't seem to get it, do we allow ourselves to learn from the struggle, trust God to provide comfort and reveal a path forward? Or do we take drastic measures, pull the plug, withdraw from community, stick to what's safe or blame others? Do we shift to automatic and do what we want instead of embarking on a struggle with Christ by our side? Do we take the road of pleasure and ease, instead of waiting for God to hear our cry in the mud?

Psalm 40 describes waiting and relying on the Lord. "I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. He has given me a new song to sing, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see what he has done and be astounded. They will put their trust in the Lord."

Let's give our children, the next generation, leaders and each other a "new song to sing" by welcoming opportunities to rely on God. Let's push ourselves as leaders, parents, mentors and friends not to run from our struggles so we may learn to face them and discover what God would have us see. I'd rather gain wisdom from new songs sung by those throughout the church than having to pull wisdom from country music.

God doesn't hand out faith and trust. That would make it "only worth the time put in." Walk away from the temptation of making faith too simple, too easy or automatic. Instead, put in the time and the toil, embrace the feelings of being scared, overwhelmed and intimidated so that, with God's Spirit at our sides, we can sing a new song, a hymn of praise to our God.

Holding on to both ends

Martha Yoder Maust is a member of Shalom Mennonite Church in Indianapolis.

When differences divide us, I believe in standing in the middle and holding on to both ends.

We live in a culture that has begun to appreciate diversity of skin color. We enjoy multicultural music and international cuisine. We have not yet learned to appreciate diversity of opinion. When we find ourselves in disagreement, we call each other names and put each other down. This happens on the political scene, in religious communities and even within families.

Some try to find harmony by insisting that deep down we are all the same. Certainly there is truth in this, but it is more honest to acknowledge the deep divisions that exist between us and work to find a way to deal with them.

For example, it is now considered correct to believe in equal rights for women and men. Some, here as well as in other cultures, believe that a secure and healthy society is only possible when authority is in the hands of men. There is no simple way to reconcile these positions and no compromise that would satisfy either group.

Free speech is enshrined in our Bill of Rights, but some think some kinds of speech should be banned. Germany has banned speech promoting the Nazi party. Many would like to ban pornographic speech. Again, there is no easy solution and no mutually satisfying compromise.

These are not superficial divisions but different beliefs about how to build a healthy society. These divisions not only exist between different parts of the country or between people from different ethnic origins or between secular people and religious people but also within religious communities. Among Christians, for example, some believe in equality and others in patriarchy, some in free speech and others in restrictions on speech.

A few years ago, John Roth found deep division along political lines in some Mennonite congregations he visited. Believers within these congregations could not speak to each other because they had such different political opinions. Today our church faces a crisis as congregations consider "divorce" from the denomination over whether people in same-sex relationships can be leaders in the church.

Jesus created a diverse group of followers. He chose Simon the Zealot, who may have been a revolutionary, and Matthew, who as a tax collector had collaborated with the Roman authorities. He expected them to travel together, eat together and pray together. After Jesus' resurrection, the Jerusalem church dealt with divisions between Aramaic-speaking local people and Greek-speaking believers, and soon Paul was dealing with integrating converted pagans into the church. From the beginning, the church has had to deal with deep differences.

Sometimes the church has dealt with divisions in disastrous ways. Consider the religious wars in Europe or the executions of Quakers in the early American colonies. But at other times, the church has found ways to heal divisions. Sanford C. Yoder, at a special session of the Mennonite General Conference in 1944, pointed out that lack of fellowship had led to distrust and division. A time of prayer, confession and reconciliation followed, and a new spirit of unity emerged.

The church is meant to include diversity of opinions. John's vision in Revelation 7:9-17 is of a great crowd "from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb." Surely with all that diversity there will also be people of different personalities and people with different opinions. Liberals and conservatives will bow down together before the throne of God and sing praises.

If the church today is to be a foretaste of that great crowd bowing in praise, we need to learn to embrace those with whom we disagree. Instead of telling others how evil or how misguided they are, we need to approach each other with respect. We need to learn how to say, "That's not how I see it. Help me understand what you mean, and I will try to explain what I think. Maybe we can find some common ground."

If the church today is to be a foretaste of that great crowd bowing in praise, we need to learn to embrace those with whom we disagree.

The ancient biblical story of Jacob tells of a night he spent wrestling with an angel. In the morning he found himself limping but also wiser. After that night, he was able to experience reconciliation with his brother, from whom he had been estranged for over 20 years.

I look for the day when we will be able to wake up from a long night of wrestling and limp toward reconciliation with our brothers and sisters in this fractured human family. Until then, you will find me in the middle, holding on to both ends and trying to help others find ways to bridge the gaps.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

A Christ-centered response to terrorism

Eastern Mennonite Missions' Christian-Muslim Relations Team seeks peace.

Are Muslims trying to take over America? Who are the "true Muslims"—the peaceful ones or the violent ones? How should Christians respond to jihadi Muslims? Isn't force the only effective way to respond to Islamist terrorism?

The Christian-Muslim Relations Team (CMRT) of Eastern Mennonite Missions hears such questions on a regular basis. These inquiries motivated team members Jonathan Bornman, Sheryl Martin, Andres Prins, and David and Grace Shenk to craft their recent statement, "Confessing the Peace of Jesus in a Terroristic World."

"Our desire is for Christians to take seriously the command of Jesus to be peacemakers and our calling to be Christ's ambassadors and ministers of reconciliation," says Bornman. "We have been entrusted with a message of freedom, reconciliation, and salvation. Muslims won't hear our witness, unless faithful disciples of Jesus build friendships in which this message can be shared."

"When I talk to Muslims about the violence of Nigeria's Boko Haram or ISIS, they usually respond with, 'That's not true Islam' or, 'More guns and airplanes are needed to destroy such aggressors.' These responses remind me of the uniqueness of the church's message of forgiveness, reconciliation, healing and restoration—a message that is vitally important in our world."

"There is much concern worldwide about terrorism," says David Shenk. "There's concern about terrorism emanating from Muslim societies. There is also much concern about Western powers; the world lives within the shadow of the U.S. occupation of both Iraq and Afghanistan. I am dismayed by how high the walls dividing Muslims and Christians have become in many regions of the world. What should the response of New Testament Christians be?"

"As we meet with congregations, we sense that people are perplexed and want a better understanding of Islam and how to relate to Muslims in peace building ways," Grace Shenk says. "We need to be awake and aware in these difficult times. We need to ask God, What is my responsibility in times like these? What do you want me to do? What should we as a community of faith do? How can we be involved?"

The team's approximately 900-word statement addresses two differing Muslim "voices" and offers seven practical, transformative actions for Christians who desire to be messengers of God's healing and peace through Jesus.

"I am grieved that many Christians have written off Muslims as unapproachable, as sworn enemies or as not-open-to-or-in-need-of God's redemptive love in the Messiah," Prins says. "I have heard of many Christians who have had Muslim neighbors for years and never sought to get to know them, extended hospitality, shared about spiritual matters or offered to pray in Jesus' name for God's blessing in their lives—something most Muslims deeply appreciate."

"Many of my Muslim friends have expressed surprise when they get acquainted with us and discover that my family and I honor and worship God and keep moral family standards," Martin says. "Even though we may look different, speak different languages, and dress differently, inside we al have the same needs and desires."

Martin says she is always pleased to receive phone calls about how to reach out. "One Christian woman who was reaching out to her Iraqi neighbors asked for conversation ideas given their limited common vocabulary. I encouraged her to share their family photo album."

A few months ago, Martin shared with Muslim friends how the wife of Jerry Umanos, a U.S. pediatrician killed by gunman in Afghanistan in April, said she was able to forgive her husband's killer. The older Muslim woman was shocked and said, "He should never be forgiven."

Martin explains, "Although forgiveness is commended in the Qur'an, retribution is a prominent theme. Forgiving instead of seeking revenge is an amazing grace offered through Christ."

"All the Muslims I have shared with about our 'peacemakers confessing Christ' work have expressed approval and appreciation," Prins says. "I recently had a surprising airport conversation with a Saudi Arabian Shia Muslim who showed keen interest in reading, for the first time in his life some of Jesus' teachings in the Gospels. At one point he asked me how we managed to do peacemaking without slipping into 'proselytism.' I answered that everyone is trying i one way or another to convince everyone else of what they believe. The important thing is that we do it respectfully an honestly. He agreed."

"Recently I was in a two-day gathering of about 200 Muslim and Christian leaders in Tanzania in a meeting convened by the president, who is Muslim," says David Shenk. "We met in groups of about six, with Muslim groups on one side of the room and Christian groups on the other side. Each side discussed what they appreciated about the other and then reported back to the whole assembly. So Muslims hear Christians sharing what they appreciate about Muslims and then vice versa. That exchange set the spirit for our whole two days together. The spirit of trust that developed in that group opened doors for hearing and sharing faith. That gathering was a model of trust-building that Christians and Muslims could emulate around the world."

Read the team's statement on the next page.—*Linda Moffett for Eastern Mennonite Missions*

Confessing the peace of Jesus in a terroristic world

A statement and appeal from the EMM Christian-Muslim relations team

As a team, we teach about Christian-Muslim relations in North America and around the world. We can always expect questions about Islamist terrorism. There is global concern about terroristic movements such as Nigeria's Boko Haram. And Christian communities with a 2,000-year history in the Middle East are being uprooted and scattered in response to Islamist threats against their lives. In acts of reciprocal terror, both Israel and Gaza have been pummeled by rocket attacks. U.S. drone attacks regularly kill leaders of movements opposed by the U.S. government. The disturbing question we face in our commitments to peacemaking is, What has gone wrong?

When we listen to our Muslim neighbors, we hear two different voices. One is of Muslims committed to the conviction that God's mercy is paramount as they strive peacefully to bring every area of life into submission to the will of "the most merciful and compassionate" God. The other is of Muslims committed to doing whatever they can to impose God's justice and judgment, as understood in Islam, on the rest of the world till all have been submitted to his will.

The prophet of Islam mirrored both voices. During 12 years in Mecca, with no political power and often with life under threat, he proclaimed an understanding of Islam that suggests that forgiveness and tolerance are the better way. Then came the momentous event of his pilgrimage from Mecca to Medina, known as the Hijrah. In Medina he became not only prophet but statesman and military commander. He defeated his enemies in battle and in time returned to Mecca, leading his army in victory. He forgave defeated enemies who demonstrated remorse but allowed other of his detractors to be handled as traitors.

Both faces are present in the Qur'an as well as the Muslim traditions. Some Muslims are especially formed by the "sword" verses of their scriptures; others are formed by the "suffering for righteousness" verses. These different interpretations are not strange to Christians, who also meet a God of vengeance and a God of forgiveness in the Bible. However, the reign of God in the biblical Messianic vision is the restoration of peace centered in redemptive love.

Six hundred years before the prophet of Islam, followers of Jesus in Galilee forcefully attempted to make him their king. He rejected that invitation and instead took the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, where he was crucified. Those wounded, welcoming arms of that man on the cross are the arms of the One who is "God with us." Open arms are for forgiving; they are for embrace and reconciliation. This is the reason churches across the Middle East are recognized as communities of reconciliation and forgiveness.

Three hundred years after Jesus, a third journey happened that has immensely distorted the gospel witness. Constantine, in defense of his imperial ambitions, had the cross painted on the shields of his soldiers. He won the war under the sign of the cross. Seven hundred years later, Christian Crusaders devastated the Middle East under the sign of the cross. Many Muslims perceive the wars of the last decade as a continuation of those Crusades. Witness Serbian militia planting crosses in the ashes of burned-out Kosovo villages during the Serb-Kosovo war 15 years ago.

These three journeys powerfully inform our modern situation: Jesus to the cross in Jerusalem, Muhammad to power in Medina, Constantine to empire in Rome. These are journeys in different directions. Which do we choose?

Just over a year ago, one on our team met with the associate to the Grand Mufti of Egypt. Our team member told about the Anabaptists of the 16th century, who would not participate in Europe's wars against Muslims because Jesus calls his disciples to love the enemy. He explained that he is a member of a community that joins with peace-loving Christians and all people of peace in seeking to build bridges, not walls. He shared that although we recognize our inadequacy, we seek to be people of Christ's peace.

The Imam responded that he had a message to all American Christians. First, work for justice and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians. He observed that the church in America carries special responsibilities for encouraging justice with peace in Israel/Palestine.

Second, follow Jesus. He observed that as American Christians follow Jesus they become a life-transforming community. He commented that historically Egyptian Christians have been examples of communities of transformation.

We invite you to join us in taking these steps:

1. Pray that God's kingdom will come on earth as in heaven—pray for shalom.
2. Commit to working for justice.
3. Develop friendships with Muslims.
4. Share generously with church agencies working in the current refugee crisis.
5. Show hospitality to the displaced people who come your way from regions in turmoil.
6. Express appreciation for the ways so many Muslims show compassion and serve the broader community.
7. Always commend Christ in your words and actions.

Our world needs communities of witness and healing who confess that the God of the universe is fully revealed in that Man on a cross who forgives and reconciles his enemies and who in his resurrection brings about a new creation.
—Jonathan Bornman, Sheryl Martin, Andres Prins, Grace and David Shenk

Christopher Dock choir connects with French churches

Connections made with French Mennonites help build bridges.

It's always fun showing our visitors where we live and introducing them to our churches and some of the youth we work with. We think of it as building little bridges between our community and theirs, making the world and the global church feel just a little bit smaller and friendlier than it did before and introducing both our community here and those who come to visit to a new kind of people and a new way of being in the world.

This month of visitors culminated with a pretty extraordinary visit; although, to our visitors, we must say that they're all extraordinary to us. But this visit was extraordinary not just in quality but also in quantity. We welcomed Rodney Derstine and the Christopher Dock Mennonite High School Touring Choir to Paris—45 youth and seven chaperones.

The choir arrived in the village of Villeneuve-le-Comte the last Sunday in June. They performed at a lovely old Catholic church, which is much larger than our Mennonite church there, has better acoustics and is better-known by local non-Protestants. The choir performed to a full house, with attendees from all three of the Mennonite churches in the Paris region (some who had traveled hours to get there) as well as many local people.

The concert was great, and the audience loved it. The choir even received a standing ovation. I heard several glowing comments, and received appreciative emails.

It was good to hear that the audience "understood" and "felt the Spirit moving," even though many couldn't understand all of the words (none of the songs was sung in French). How incredible that people can communicate not with what they say but in how they express it!

We asked them to sing on the fly and they did, before a city full of strangers, without hesitating and without complaining.

After the concert, students went home with host families from the three Mennonite churches. We met up in Paris the next day for a full eight hours of touring the city.

The best part for me was watching the French youth from our churches, who had volunteered as tour guides, interacting with the Americans. All together, we were around 75 people, though we split into groups of about 10 to sightsee. By the end of the day, it was fun to see how the kids had already connected, despite language barriers.

The second best part was one of the first things that happened. We started the morning all together at the Notre Dame Cathedral. We had gathered for a group picture. Then, Brad, my husband, asked the choir to sing before we starte our day. They did, right there in the courtyard of the Cathedral, before what was hundreds, if not thousands, of people.

The Christopher Dock Mennonite High School Touring Choir singi at L'Église Notre-Dame-de-la-Nativité in Villeneuve-le-Comte, nea Paris

As the choir sang, tourists slowed down and stared. French folks going about their day stopped. Some got out their phones to take videos. I smiled like a crazy person, ex cited that the choir was there with us and that the weather was perfect, happy that after all that coordinating, their singing was more beautiful than I'd hoped.

But mostly, I was smiling at their faith, their fearlessnes We asked them to sing on the fly and they did, before a city full of strangers, without hesitating and without complainin

They sang a song called "God is Seen," which is about how all the things God created declare God's presence.

A few of the lines go like this:

"Through all the world below God is seen all around,
Search hills and valleys through,
There he's found."

In a post-Christendom society like here in France, peopl sometimes say that God has been lost. But in that moment, the choir reminded us, our youth and all the strangers (Christian and non-Christian) passing by the Cathedral that morning, that God is never lost but always with us.

And in that moment, I knew that God was.—*Brenna Steury Graber, with her husband, Brad Graber, is a mission worker with Mennonite Mission Network in Paris, France. This article is adapted from a blog post from http://bradleyand-brenna.blogspot.fr.*

Practical tools for healing in Paraguay and Argentina

Nearly 160 women participate in Sister Care Seminars in the two countries.

The women who gathered for Sister Care seminars in Paraguay and Argentina in August came from widely varying ethnicities, church denominations and theological beliefs, but their responses echoed a similar heartfelt thought. One woman said, "You told me it is possible to break the chains of oppression and pain and you have given me the tools to know how to do it."

The 113 women who met at Los Alpes Hotel near Asunción, Paraguay, came from Mennonite Church and Mennonite Brethren denominations and were joined by a group of 16 from across the border in northern Argentina. The 30 women at Bragado in Argentina a week later came mostly from Iglesia Evangélica Menonita Argentina but also included friends from Pentecostal and Catholic churches. Varying ethnicities included Latinas, Indigenous and Germanic Mennonites.

These women united with the simple yet profound teaching at the heart of the Sister Care seminar: to be an effective healing presence for others, we need healing from our own wounds. And God can use our tears to help others. Presenters Carolyn Heggen, a psychotherapist specializing in trauma healing, and Rhoda Keener, Mennonite Women USA co-director, guided participants through four units, beginning with the truth that each woman is a beloved daughter of God. This is followed by the importance of self-care when caring for others, the healing power of compassionate listening and transforming loss and grief.

I've been a Christian for many years, but this is the first time the concept of salvation has been made practical for me.

One woman responded: "Three years ago, I was raped, and it was something that ruined my life, but in these days here I have learned that God still sees me as a beautiful, pure woman. I have felt called to be a missionary and to help other women who carry heavy shame and wounds."

Another woman echoed this thought, saying about the seminar: "I have learned ways of taking off the heavy shawl of shame and fear I have worn for many years. I am going to take what I have learned to help heal the wounds of others in my church."

Rhoda Keener says, "Our mission with Sister Care is to provide practical tools for women to help in their healing journeys. When we heal, our response becomes like the woman at the well. She ran back to her village to tell others about the Messiah. Women are often surprised that Sister Care begins by looking at our own need to know that we are beloved daughters of God and by taking seriously our life experiences and personal story. But that is also where Jesus started with the woman at the well."

The Sister Care presenters state that "good theology and good psychology can work together to help in healing." Many women said they have heard from their churches that psychology and psychiatric medications are not needed if one's faith is strong enough. A seminary student wrote: "I will return to my studies in psychology (which God has called me to), grateful to realize that psychology need not be in conflict with the Word of God."

Carolyn Heggen sums up the experience of teaching in Paraguay and Argentina thus: "Once again I have been blessed by the emotional warmth, responsiveness and openness of our Latin American sisters. Beyond our differences in culture, history and politics, many of us share a common longing for our beliefs and faith to make a practical difference in our lives. One woman said, 'I've been a Christian for many years, but this is the first time the concept of salvation has been made practical for me. You've helped me know how to apply God's healing and salvation to my personal story and wounds. This will help me in my own healing and as I share God's plan of salvation with others who are hurting.' "

Mennonite Women USA is grateful for the local women who hosted these events, for Linda Shelly, Latin American director for Mennonite Mission Network, for her invaluable assistance in planning these seminars, and for the many generous donors who make this ministry possible.—*Mennonite Women USA*

Rhoda Keener

Women at the Argentina Sister Care unite in prayer for Linda Shelly of Newton, Kan., as she relates with her mother, Viola, who is almost 98 years old.

Indigenous rights and the Doctrine of Discovery

Church leaders want Mennonites to learn about this unjust doctrine.

Twenty church leaders from across the United States and Canada met in San Francisco Aug. 21-22 to strategize about engaging the Mennonite church in the ecumenical effort to dismantle the Doctrine of Discovery.

The Doctrine of Discovery is a legal framework that defines Indigenous peoples' individual and collective rights as well as their access to land, water and resources. For centuries, it has served as the legal foundation that allows for the invasion and seizure of Indigenous lands, water and resources. This doctrine was originally devised, affirmed and implemented by the Christian church, is based on Christian theology and pervades the Christian church to this day.

As gold mining, oil exploration and other forms of resource extraction continue to drive the economy in North America, Indigenous Peoples around the globe together with creation continue to bear the most devastating environmental impacts and adverse health effects.

"For centuries, the Great Commission, coupled with an understanding of Christian settlers as God's chosen people, has justified the seizure and exploitation of Indigenous lands and the marginalization of Indigenous peoples," said Sarah Augustine one of the Roundtable's planners and co-founder of Suriname Indigenous Health Fund. "Many of us individually and collectively have benefitted from a history of settlement. As we strive to be faithful to the Creator according to the example of Jesus, it makes sense that we join Indigenou peoples now to dismantle destructive laws and policies that are based in Christian theology."

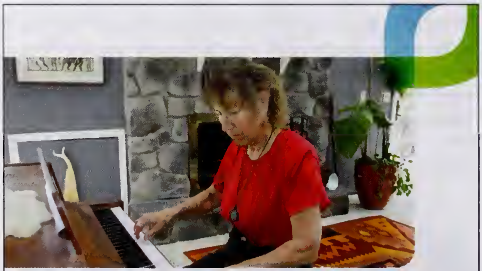
Sarah Augustine is in relationship with the Wayana people of Suriname, South America. International conventions and policies make it possible for North American mining companies to mine the rainforest where the Wayana have lived for millennia. Health impacts of mineral mining include the contamination of the Wayana's food and water b mercury, cyanide and other lethal pollutants, land seizure, militarization and the forced removal of Wayana people to urban slums.

The assembled leaders agreed to focus efforts on educating the Mennonite church about the doctrine as a first step in mobilizing the church to action.

On the Yakama reservation in central Washington, wher Sarah lives with her husband and young son, Concentrated Cow Calf Operations dump large amounts of animal waste, contaminating the groundwater local families depend on. As environmental regulations are strengthened in other parts the state, corporate producers seek less-regulated areas to dispose of waste, arguing that the low population density justifies this. Similar environmental contamination through mining, logging, agriculture and other extractive industries plague many Indian reservations in the United States.

The assembled leaders agreed to focus efforts on educating the Mennonite church about the doctrine as a first step in mobilizing the church to action. The United Methodist Church, Episcopal Church of the United States and several other denominations has already passed statements repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery. Augustine has also worked with the World Council of Churches to not only repudiate the doctrine but establish an institutional commitment to address current impacts.

First Mennonite Church of San Francisco hosted the meeting. Mennonite organizations partnering in this effort include Mennonite Central Committee-Central States, Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference, Pacific Northwest Mennonite Conference, Mennonite Church USA, Mennonit Creation Care Network and Christian Peacemaker Teams.
—Sheri Hostetler



After breaking her arm ice skating, Barbara Stone of Millersburg, Ohio, said, *"I am SO GLAD that I had health insurance. It was enough dealing with the pain and temporary disability."*

She almost didn't buy the insurance when she was turning 65. After all, she was in perfect health.

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A calm presence can bring change, says AMBS student

Sandra Stevens reports on her work in Iraq with Christian Peacemaker Teams.

A break from seminary study didn't take Sandra Stevens to her former home in Iowa but to Iraq, where she served as a member of the Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) delegation.

This summer, during Stevens' third visit to Iraq, she became immersed in developments as ISIS, an extreme group calling itself the Islamic State, took control of areas in northern Iraq, displacing an estimated 1 million people.

On Sept. 4 at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., the peace studies student outlined events in Iraqi Kurdistan during June through August. Because the CPT delegation visited checkpoints and refugee camps, Stevens could share firsthand images and impressions.

She explained, "Our goal is getting the stories, going out to the places where the events were occurring." Their responsibility then is to share the stories to prompt others to act. Their hope, Stevens said, is motivating people to provide relief supplies, write to people with power to help, do actions that call attention to needs, and keep the refugees in the forefront for our government.

It is important to "strengthen the positive force, which is a counter to ISIS," Stevens says. "We need to be a presence in that conflict zone as Christians, demonstrating unconditional love and support for the people. That's the action I have taken as a CPTer, to go out and work for people and show them that there is an alternative to this violence."

Because of the tremendous flow of people out of the area where ISIS was taking control, relief agencies were overwhelmed. In the midst of the needs, Stevens was moved by the caring responses she saw. Food, water, mattresses, blankets and even a residence were shared by Muslims to the Christian and Yazidi refugees.

When asked how to pray for the situation in Iraq, Stevens said, "The direction of our prayers should be that God will soften the hearts of ISIS, that they will turn from the path of violence and destruction and that peace can be found throughout the Middle East. That's a big request of God, but it's something that he can handle."

To describe her CPT ministry, Stevens drew from experiences during 25 years as a paramedic. "Oftentimes we would get into scenes where basically there is pandemonium, with people screaming and nothing is getting done," she said about her earlier work. If you have the presence of mind and clarity and calm demeanor when you go into the scene, all these people who are in this panic frame of mind will focus on you. All of a sudden everybody calms down, everything starts to work together.

Mary E Klassen

Sandra Stevens, a student at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, points out areas of ISIS activity in northern Iraq during a presentation at the seminary about her experiences there.

"I think that with the Christian presence, if it is done with honest, open, accepting love and forgiveness, it can make a change. Jesus didn't try to change everything all at once; he just tried to change his own circle and then send them out. That's what we need to do, and the more we can do this, the more we can overwhelm people like ISIS."—*Mary E. Klassen*

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Relief and relationships go hand in hand in South Sudan

MCC continues to provide food and encourage understanding.

As conflict has displaced more than 1.5 million people in South Sudan since late December 2013, about 70,000 of them have sought refuge at an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Awerial County, South Sudan, where they find people who speak the same language.

The Sudanese Relief and Development Agency (SUDRA) coordinated a food distribution project to help meet the needs of displaced children. The project, which is supported by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), also helped provide a place of stability, where people could begin to build a sense of community and routine.

That stable place and sense of community is important, says Andrew Biar, a volunteer supervisor at one of the feeding centers, because it helps people manage the kind of conflicts that arise when people are suddenly dislocated and placed in extreme circumstances.

"The MCC-SUDRA feeding program has restored the hopes of the community, brought a good number of pastors together and increased reconciliation as people meet and interact together," says Biar, who is a volunteer from the Episcopal Diocese in Awerial County.

The project provided two months of food for 7,539 displaced children under 5 in Awerial County from mid-February to mid-April. Because food was distributed primarily at church compounds, it encouraged people to join church activities and meet each other.

"The feeding programs provided people with a place to gather and talk and learn firsthand that in settings marked by common hardships, cross-cultural, religious and linguisti differences can turn out to be no more important than the differences that exist among individual human beings," says Brendan Tuttle, MCC's representative for South Sudan and Sudan.

Emergency relief is necessary," says Tuttle, "but we have also tried to ensure that our longer-term projects continue.—Brendan Tuttle

Since conflict in South Sudan erupted 10 months ago, MCC has allocated more than $1.1 million in funding and resources, such as relief kits and canned meat, for displaced South Sudanese people both inside the country and in Keny and Ethiopia.

In addition to the food distribution in Awerial, MCC is supporting the distribution of food baskets or vouchers to more than 21,000 displaced people in Budi and Mundri coun ties in South Sudan through its account at the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

MCC also is supporting a project with Lutheran World Federation to provide supplementary food, such as fruit, to children, new and expecting mothers, seniors and people with disabilities or illness in Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. Refugees in Gambella, Ethiopia, will receive MCC relief, hygiene and school kits, blankets and canned meat.

Beyond meeting basic needs, MCC is continuing to support education, peacebuilding and agriculture projects in South Sudan. This includes funding two training sessions o dealing with trauma for 80 women and youth church leaders and supporting a similar program for South Sudanese refugees in Kenya.

In Sudan, MCC is starting a three-year program providin meals at school for children, some displaced by conflict in South Sudan. The meals increase students' attendance and ability to focus.

"Emergency relief is necessary," says Tuttle, "but we have also tried to ensure that our longer-term projects continue and embody the kind of world we hope to live in—one where discussions about peace, schooling, libraries and farms have a useful place."—*Emily Loewen of MCC*

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MCC responds to Central American migration

Funds support ministries in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Arizona, Texas.

In a year when the flow of Central American families to the U.S. border has made headlines, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is responding broadly—meeting basic needs for those deported or detained, increasing awareness about the realities of migration and, in the United States, urging compassion for families fleeing violence in their home countries.

"This is continuing our invitation to welcome the stranger, to open our hearts and to see the image of God in all who are coming and to receive them," says Saulo Padilla, MCC U.S. immigration education coordinator.

While the unprecedented number of families and children fleeing violence and poverty in Central America and arriving at the U.S. border has slowed, the MCC U.S. Washington Office notes that the Obama administration is opening new family detention centers and quickly deporting women and children, often back to the dangerous situations from which they fled.

Given that reality, "our response goes not just as far as the border but south to the other countries as well," Padilla stressed.

Indeed, the largest effort funded at this point is a $20,000 project with the Honduran Mennonite Social Action Committee, which will provide emergency food, shelter and counseling to some 110 children and youth who have been deported back to Honduras from the United States and do not have family members awaiting them. Sometimes children need care for a few days until relatives arrive from rural areas, but in other cases no family can be found, and children need care for longer periods. The project, which runs through December, also provides medical assistance and clothing for 50 youth.

In Guatemala, MCC comforters and blankets and hygiene kits will help meet needs at a home for migrants run by Missionaries of Saint Charles Scalabrinians. MCC will provide $5,000 to purchase bedding, medicines and first aid supplies for migrants, and cleaning supplies for the home, providing temporary shelter for migrant men, women and children.

MCC also is supporting a $5,000 project through a long-time partner in El Salvador, New Dawn Association (ANADES), to raise awareness in some 10 communities about the process of migrating to the United States. In the communities where ANADES works, there is not always good information about the risks versus rewards for children and families migrating north. The project, which runs through January 2015, brings together community members through existing women's and youth groups as well as public forums, educational talks, film screenings and radio interviews to help families make informed decisions.

Meanwhile, here in the United States, the numbers of unaccompanied minors crossing the border is declining, but legal proceedings are accelerating for the tens of thousands of children who were detained and released to family or friend sponsors. That's placing a severe strain on already-stretched nonprofits and attorneys providing free or low-cost services to migrants.

MCC is providing $10,000 through the Cabrini Center in Houston and another $5,000 through the Florence Project in Phoenix, Ariz., to help cover costs associated with processing the cases of children and youth who were detained on immigration charges.

The MCC U.S. Washington Office is urging congregations and individuals in the United States to contact members of Congress and President Obama asking them to treat Central American migrants with fairness and compassion and to seek out local opportunities to show compassion to these migrants. Go to mcc.org/ca-migrant-resources for resources and information.

Donations of money are welcome at donate.mcc.org/migrants or by calling 888-563-4676.—*Marla Pierson Lester*

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Hope for the Future IV to examine decision-making

Fourth conference for racial/ethnic leaders to be held Jan. 23-24, 2015.

In the fourth year of the Hope for the Future conference, leaders interested in advancing multicultural leadership within Mennonite Church USA will seek to identify and broaden power-sharing and decision-making within the church.

The conference will take place Jan. 23–24, 2015, at Iglesia Menonita Arca de Salvación in Fort Myers, Fla. Everence, the Goshen (Ind.) College Center for Intercultural and International Education, Mennonite Central Committee, Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Education Agency and Mennonite Mission Network sponsor the event.

By examining the decision-making processes, Hope for the Future IV will help people connect and participate in decision-making, regardless of their culture and family name, says Carlos Romero, executive director of Mennonite Education Agency and a planner of the event.

This year, a special invitation is extended to racial/ethnic young adults from Mennonite colleges.

"Whenever people enter institutional work, it can be years before they figure out how the institution works and how the power is used," says Iris de León-Hartshorn, lead coordinator for Hope for the Future. She is also director of transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA.

> I'm very excited about this year, because we're moving into the practical impact of how to help people of color have a more influential role in the denomination.—Carlos Romero

"We hope this [conference] will introduce younger people to leadership in church organizations with more information [about how church institutions operate] than we had, which will help them participate more and have more influence within an organization," says de León-Hartshorn.

The Hope for the Future conferences began in 2011 as a gathering of racial/ethnic leaders from throughout Mennonite Church USA. The conference was a way to bring together the different racial/ethnic groups—Asian Mennonite Ministries; African American Mennonite Association; African, Belizean, Caribbean, Mennonite Missions Association; Iglesia Menonita Hispana (Hispanic Mennonite Church) and Native Mennonite Ministries—and to create strategies for increasing racial/ethnic representation among Mennonite church leadership.

The January gathering was the first to include white leaders of Mennonite institutions; planners invited them so that they could work toward systemic and institutional change.

"Hope for the Future provides a great forum to connect with others who either share a common experience of having been impacted by racism or who share a common commitment to eradicate this sin," says Stanley W. Green, executive director of Mennonite Mission Network. Green i involved in planning the conference. "The gathering is a place for fellowship, support and imagining together the po sibilities before us as we struggle for a post-racist church."

One of the valuable opportunities offered by the conference is networking. Romero says he's heard human resources managers comment that although they're committe to hiring racial/ethnic people, they often lack connections with them.

"I'm very excited about this year, because we're moving into the practical impact of how to help people of color have a more influential role in the denomination," says Romero. "This conference [will] be an opportunity for people to buil relationships with the growing part of the church—that is, the future of the church."

Fifteen percent of Mennonite Church USA member are racial/ethnic, according to the most recent sociological survey conducted by Conrad Kanagy in 2006 and published in *Road Signs for the Journey*. This is an increase from 6 percent racial/ethnic membership in 1991. Kanagy's survey als suggested that Mennonite membership overall was declini and aging, with the exception of racial/ethnic members, wh on average were younger.

The invitation to young adults came out of conversation during the Hope for the Future III conference in January. Many of the participants, from both racial/ethnic and white cultures, shared that the mentorship and guidance they received from experienced adults were instrumental to their success as leaders.

"For years we have engaged in awareness-raising regarding the dynamics of systemic racism and the need for developing intercultural competency," says Green. "Hope for the Future has evolved, and we're at the stage where the opportunity is before us to engage constructive strategies to mov toward greater equality and inclusion for people of all ethni ities in our church."

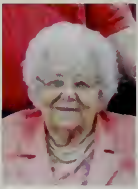
Registration online by Oct. 1 is $125 per person. After Oct. 1, the rate goes up to $150. Student registration is $75 before Oct. 1, and $100 afterward. Registration fees include the event program costs, transportation from the hotel to th conference site and meals/snacks. Participants are responsible to cover their own lodging cost and transportation to Fo Myers.—*Sara Alvarez for Everence, Mennonite Church USA Mennonite Education Agency, and Mennonite Mission Network*

First ordained Mennonite woman pastor dies at 87

Emma Richards officially ordained in 1973 by Illinois Mennonite Conference

Emma Richards, the first Mennonite woman to be ordained as a pastor of a Mennonite congregation, died Sept. 6 at age 87 in Goshen, Ind.

Born March 17, 1927, she graduated from Goshen College in 1949 and received a bachelor of theology degree at Goshen Biblical Seminary. She then taught at Bluffton (Ohio) College (now University).



Richards and her husband, Joe Richards, served with Mennonite Board of Missions in Japan from 1954 to 1966. They also were co-pastors of an Ohio Presbyterian church for two years while attending graduate school. In 1968, Joe became pastor at Lombard (Ill.) Mennonite Church. They left Lombard in 1991 to become interim ministers for Illinois Mennonite Conference (IMC) and retired in 1996.

Lombard Mennonite Church made the Richards a pastoral team in 1971, then sent a proposal for ordination to IMC. During a discernment meeting at the conference, the church representatives were asked if this proposal was motivated by the fact that Lombard would become the first Mennonite congregation to ordain a woman as pastor. Lombard was already the first church in its conference to use an organ regularly, have a permanent choir and have most females attend worship without a covering.

During the spring of 1972, IMC's leadership commission recommended that Emma receive a pastoral license for a period before ordination be re-examined. It said her call to ministry, her education and experience were not being questioned; the only issue being addressed was the fact that she was a woman. A committee that included men and women formed to address the issue and eventually recommended the ordination of Emma Richards to IMC. The conference approved the motion on April 7, 1973, while making clear this was a specific case and that this action did not approve of ordination being open to all women. Richards' installation service was held at LMC on Oct. 15, 1972, but she was not officially ordained by the conference until June 17, 1973.

IMC opened ordination to all women on April 2, 1982.

Ann Allebach was actually the first Mennonite woman to be ordained. She was ordained by the General Conference Mennonite Church in Philadelphia on Jan. 15, 1911. However, she was never installed as a pastor of a Mennonite congregation. There were no other women ordained between Ann Allebach and Emma Richards.

Richards preached during Sunday morning service at the Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Strasbourg, France, in 1984.

Richards once said, "A woman has to work twice as hard to prove herself—be a better student, be a better preacher and manage an effective household."

She is survived by her husband, along with two daughters, Kathryn (Jon) Beckwith and Lois (Jim) Woods, both of Hillsdale, Mich.; a son, Evan (Laura) Richards, of Villa Park, Ill.; nine grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; a sister, Elaine (Ron) Rich, of Bluffton, Ohio; and two brothers, Dan and Elvin (Barb) Sommers, both of Kokomo, Ind.

She was preceded in death by a brother Sam Sommers.
—*Gordon Houser*

Correction: In the September issue, page 41, we should have used the following caption with the photo: Pastors, from left, Philip Manlupa, Susan Garbe, Virgie Beduya (orange shirt), Lorenza Ecalde and Tony Mantua participate in a water rescue simulation that was part of a recent four-day peace, reconciliation and disaster preparedness workshop for 23 pastors. (MCC photo/Ann Campbell Janz)

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Programs of Mennonite Central Committee

Program helps EMU graduate find work in Washington

Stint at Washington Community Scholar's Center leads to job.

Erica Grasse

Two 2014 graduates of Eastern Mennonite University—Stephen Quenzer (above) and Joel Murray—were hired by Financial Education and Literacy Associates upon completion of a stint at EMU's Washington Community Scholar's Center.

Stephen Quenzer was always intrigued by the idea of living in a "big city." So right after earning his bachelor's degree in computer science in May from Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., the Visalia, Calif., native spent the summer on his cross-cultural experience at the Washington Community Scholars' Center (WCSC).

What he discovered in those 10 weeks as an intern surprised him and prepared him to make the commitment to begin his career in Washington, D.C.

"I finished the WCSC program on a Friday and started my new job on a Monday," Quenzer said shortly after an evening commute last month to his newly rented apartment in the Northwest neighborhood of Petworth. "I thought WCSC would be a great experience of living in a big city for two and a half months. I couldn't imagine doing it for a long period of time, and I was never expecting to stay."

Now director of technology at Financial Education and Literacy Associates (FELA), Quenzer manages the outsourced development of the D.C.-based startup company, which offers personalized online programs that teach consumers how to improve their financial situation.

In an odd twist, Quenzer's new job isn't a result of his summer internship with *Sojourners*, working on the Christian publication's website. Instead it is the result of networking opportunities provided by WCSC alumnus Joel Murray, who graduated from EMU in May as well, and the program's former associate director, Sheldon C. Good.

WCSC internships regularly lead to offers of full-time employment, according to program director Kimberly D. Schmidt.

This was the case for Murray, a business administration major who had interned the previous semester with FELA. After graduating in May, Murray accepted full-time employment with the company. He then contacted Quenzer about doing freelance web design and consulting.

"I came in several times throughout the summer and go to know the company better," Quenzer said. "And it turned out they needed someone with my skills."

Quenzer had some real concerns, however. "Ninety percent of start-ups fail, so there was a real risk for me to take out an annual lease on an apartment in Washington without some assurance of financial stability," he said.

Discussions with Good, who was a friend of the company's founder, allayed his concerns.

"That was really helpful," Quenzer said. "The connections I had through WCSC and the networking opportunitie really helped me make that decision and feel it was a good one."

Quenzer also feels more comfortable in Washington than he ever imagined, thanks to the immersive, cross-cultural experience of living in WCSC's intentional community as an independent, working adult.

> Organizing house jobs, sharing money to buy food, learning how to get along with people from different backgrounds—all of that was a really valuable experience.—Stephen Quenzer

"Organizing house jobs, sharing money to buy food, learning how to get along with people from different backgrounds—all of that was a really valuable experience," Quenzer said. "Some have lived in a city before and some haven't, and everyone is in a different place in their lives, and you have to exist together. You get the total experience of working full-time, taking public transportation, enjoying what the city has to offer. It really gave me an idea of what i would be like."

"We are proud of Stephen's accomplishments," Schmidt said. "He will join many former students who, through the WCSC, have come to the city, found good work and are now making valuable contributions to our local neighborhoods."—*Lauren Jefferson of Eastern Mennonite University*

Bethel College service project helps feed local hungry

School year begins with students packaging 50,000 meals.

Serving together may be one of the best ways for people to learn to know and appreciate each other. So service was an important part of Bethel Bridge, a beginning-of-the-year program Bethel College, North Newton, Kan., designed to help new students feel at home.

Bethel Bridge was inaugurated Aug. 18-19. On Aug. 18, the official first day of the semester, instead of classes, all students attended the annual opening-of-school convocation, then went to seminars geared to particular needs (e.g., transfer students, major areas).

On the morning of Aug. 19, after a special convocation on discipleship, the campus community worked to package 50,000 meals to be given to the Harvey County Food Pantry.

Matt Hein, assistant director of development who wrote a successful United Way grant to support the project, reported the number from sign-up sheets as 450, starting with the men's soccer team, who helped unload the truck with supplies and set up the Memorial Hall gym for the packaging.

Since service is one of Bethel's four core values, when Bethel administrators were planning Bethel Bridge, "we wanted to do a project as a way of reinforcing the importance of service, something that would involve all students," says Brad Born, vice president for academic affairs.

"We remembered the success of the food packaging we did after the earthquake in Haiti in 2010," he continues. "So we turned to Rick McNary for ideas."

McNary, a Bethel graduate, founded Numana Inc., the organization that sponsored Bethel's 2010 meal-packaging event. McNary suggested Outreach, headquartered in Union, Iowa.

Originally begun in 2004 as a mission to people in Tanzania, Outreach now works "to provide safe water, food, medical care and education to children and those in need at home and abroad," according to its website.

Rick McNary is a vice president of the organization, and one of his sons, Isaac McNary, organizes food-packaging events for Outreach, including the one at Bethel.

Born said at first event planners thought the food packages would go to various locations. But when they contacted Barbara Lee at Harvey County's Salvation Army office, she said the food pantry could take all 50,000.

At the Aug. 19 convocation, new campus pastor Peter Goerzen said, "Shared practices define and unite us much more than doctrines or belief. The life of discipleship is shaped by practice that engages heart, mind and body."

The student body was then divided in half, with the first group working until they completed 25,000 packages before switching with the second group.

To add a little extra fun, the groups competed to see which one could reach its 25,000 goal in the shortest time.

Vada Snyder

Ariel Williams, sophomore from Katy, Texas, participates in Bethel's service project in August.

Juniors Jennifer Kaufman, Moundridge, Kan., and Tanesha Cayton, Keyes, Okla., both softball players, enjoyed the competition aspect.

"It was fun, because we're so competitive," Kaufman said, and Cayton added, "It didn't seem like work. Students were more engaged."

Erin Regier, junior from Newton, thought the food packaging was "a way for people to get connected to the community [by giving the food away locally]. Service is one of Bethel's core values, so it was good to have the opportunity to put that into practice."

"I wish we'd do more of these," said Ally Chesbrough, a sophomore from Leawood, Kan. "Once people got going, they really liked it. And it's a good way to learn about being selfless, giving without getting anything in return."
—Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College

Tanzania Mennonite Church marks 80 years

A look at the evolution of U.S.-Tanzanian church relationships

Eighty years ago, a young Luo man on the shores of Lake Victoria hovered around the edge of a group of men. He had heard that white missionaries, newly arrived in Tanganyika, were looking for workers to help build their houses and that they planned to hire five men a month. Each month the shy young man came, and each month he failed to summon the nerve to ask for a job.

Finally, after several months, one of the missionaries noticed the quiet young man under the tree and called him over. "You have been here before," one of the missionaries said. "What is your name?"

"Marwa Kisare," answered the young man, who would become the first African Mennonite bishop. Shirati, the small village to which he went for work, would become the site of the first Mennonite congregation in East Africa. The small dispensary that one of the missionaries began out of her home would become the Shirati Hospital, a 150-bed medical facility known throughout the country for its quality of care. And the Tanzania Mennonite Church—Kanisa la Mennonite Tanzania, or KMT—would grow from 21 believers in 1935 to 64,000 members today.

John Nyagwegwe, bishop of the North Mara diocese of the Tanzania Mennonite Church, says that Tanzanian Mennonites desire relationships with North Americans.

With offices in Musoma, KMT [the Tanzania Mennonite Church] has become a thriving national body of believers, with leaders confident in their mission to spread the gospel and improve the well-being of their neighbors.

Eighty years after the missionaries arrived by dhow on the shores of Lake Victoria, Mennonites in Tanzania are no longer building houses for missionaries. Far from it. Instead, they are doing educational, evangelistic, community development and medical work that, in the words of the mission statement of the North Mara diocese, one of 10 dioceses in KMT, "build on the inherent strengths of local communities." With offices in Musoma, KMT has become a thriving national body of believers, with leaders confident in their mission to spread the gospel and improve the well-being of their neighbors.

The story of KMT is hardly unique. The well-worn narrative of global missions—colonial powers carve up territory and make it accessible to outsiders, missionaries arrive and do evangelism and development, churches grow and institutions develop, local leaders emerge, mission energy shifts elsewhere—played out in Tanzania as it did in countless other settings across the world. Still, Shirati—which Mennonites there like to call "Jerusalem" because of its central locale in the history and imagination of the church—distills that narrative in intriguing and specific ways.

Dating Tanzanian Mennonite life and identity back only t the arrival of the missionaries would be a grand mistake, however. As Pakisa T. Tshimika and Doris Dube write in *Anabaptist Songs in African Hearts*, "Any person who takes time to listen to elders in African villages can report stories about African spirituality and the role God played in our live before the arrival of the missionaries." Still, the 80-year anniversary of the first mission workers sent to Africa by Mennonites in Lancaster County, Pa., offers Mennonites on both continents the chance to take stock of their history, relationships and future. What legacy did the early missionaries leave, and how has the Tanzanian church owned or rejected it? What does healthy collaboration between Tanzanian and American churches look like in the 21st century? And how can resources, both spiritual and material, shift from the paradigm of one-way transfer to a model of two-way sharing?

The shy young man who came to Shirati looking for work 80 years ago, Marwa Kisare (who became known as Zedekiah), and his peers became the first generation of Tanzania Mennonites. They played key roles in helping the early missionaries learn local languages and culture, and

Grace Okidi serves on the executive council of the North Mara diocese of the Tanzania Mennonite Church.

they also pushed the missionaries to expand the focus of their work from evangelism to education and to view the Africans as equals in Christ rather than as colonial subjects. "We pleaded for them to teach us English if they were unable to give us a general education," Kisare wrote in his autobiography, coauthored with Joseph Shenk, *Kisare: A Mennonite of Kiseru*. "But they refused, saying that we had no need of English. 'You cannot preach the gospel to natives in English,' was their conclusion to the matter."

Eventually, during the East African revival of the 1940s, in which missionaries confessed to Tanzanians their ethnocentrism and Africans confessed to missionaries their bitterness—along with a host of other struggles running both ways—the paradigm began to shift. Lancaster Mennonite Conference constituents still pressed Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities (now Eastern Mennonite Missions) to ensure that new believers in East Africa met central tenets of plain dress and other lifestyle and doctrinal requirements, even as Tanzanian Christians adeptly parsed the distinctions between core Anabaptist beliefs and Swiss-German cultural practices. Slowly, in fits and starts, they developed their own patterns of worship and discipleship, and the way was paved for local leadership of the church to emerge.

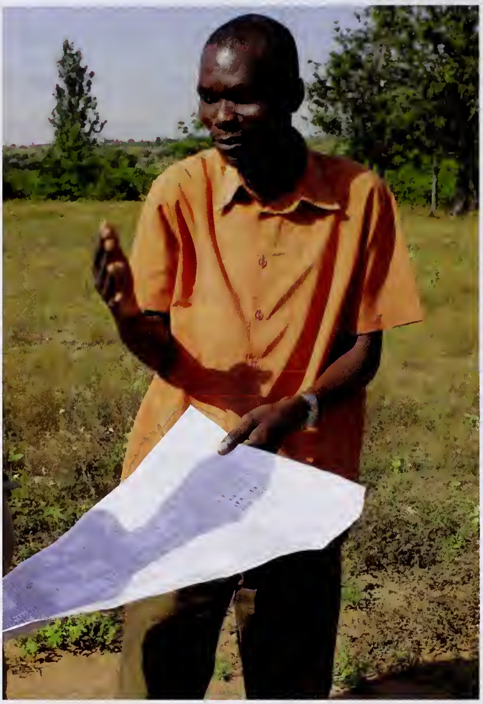
Tanzanian Mennonites still express satisfaction that their church gained independence before their country did. In 1960, the denomination was registered with the government, properties were transferred from the mission board, and the process of indigenization was well underway. Tanganyika as a country would only emerge from under the imperial thumbs of Germany and Great Britain a year later, in 1961.

The goal of Mennonite mission work all along had been that the Tanzania church be self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing. EMM is no longer sending medical workers, community development workers or church planters, all roles that Tanzanians can now fill. A few long-term links do remain—Gloria and Joe Bontrager, sponsored by Eastern Mennonite Missions, do leadership training and mentoring of church leaders in Tanzania and Kenya, and EMM's regional representative in East Africa, Aram DiGennaro, visits Tanzania Mennonite Church leaders several times a year and says EMM now serves in a "catalytic way, training trainers in strategic ways." But the days of large mission budgets and a throng of career missionaries in the region are largely over.

Today's leaders in the North Mara diocese of KMT voice dismay at what they perceive as a vacuum of relationship and interaction with Mennonites in the United States. Some Tanzanian Mennonites suggest that while the traditional missionary paradigm no longer fits, neither does what they perceive as a post-missions disconnect from the North American church. In a recent gathering of the executive council of the North Mara diocese, Tanzanian Mennonite leaders articulated a sense of abandonment by their North American sisters and brothers. "There is nothing between us anymore since the missionaries left," says Grace Okidi, a member of the executive council. John Nyagwegwe, bishop of the North Mara diocese, adds that the Tanzanian churches and North American Mennonite churches still need each other. "You don't know us anymore, and we don't know you," Nyagwegwe says. "But we need you more now than we needed them in 1934; we just need you in different ways."

So when a mission agency reduces its presence—because of the growing capacity of the local church, or changing missiological perspectives, or decline or shifts in funding—how can churches at both ends cultivate a new model of relation-

Dr. Bwire Chirangi, chief medical officer of Shirati Hospital, demonstrates how a solar light functions for operations.



Fred Otieno, director of planning and development for the North Mara diocese of KMT, shows visitors plans for the Bishop Kisare Vocational Secondary School.

ship? Nyagwegwe suggests that the model of congregation-to-congregation partnership is a key way that Tanzanian and North American churches can connect with each other. Fred Otieno, director of planning and development for the diocese, agrees. "It creates isolation if North Americans just send money," he said. "Money alone can hinder sustainability of development work in Africa. When people come and participate in the work that we are doing, we are all richer for that experience." Shantz Mennonite Church in Baden, Ontario, is helping to fund the construction of the Bishop Kisare Technical Secondary School, a church-owned school that Otieno hopes to open in 2015. Several members of the church traveled to Tanzania earlier this year to help with construction.

This type of congregation-level interaction is a model for the future, Nyagwegwe claims. It's a model that EMM embraces as well. In 2012, during his first year as EMM president, Nelson Okanya, along with several Lancaster Mennonite Conference leaders, traveled to Tanzania and Kenya to explore what congregation-to-congregation relationships might look like in the 21st century. Okanya, who is originally from Kenya, says he hopes that "these relationships will continue to be nurtured and new mission energy will be unleashed." He is confident that, even as EMM itsel faces declining giving from congregations, Tanzanian and U.S. Mennonites are making progress toward authentic relationship. EMM regional representative DiGennaro agrees, saying that a new vision is enlivening EMM's work in East Africa, one that utilizes local assets rather than seeking more Western ones and that nurtures local leaders' work in discipleship and mission.

Creating congregational partnerships can also fortify commitment—on both sides—to an Anabaptist understanding of the gospel. Otieno is concerned that young Tanzanian Mennonites are losing Anabaptist distinctives such as commitments to peacebuilding. He attributes this, in part, to th lack of theological education. The Mennonite Theological College of East Africa (MTCEA), established in 1937 as a Bible school and as a theological college in 1962, was once vital center of theological and biblical education for pastors and church leaders in Kenya and Tanzania. The college was recently shuttered for a term because of lack of funding, although it was reopened in January. "Many young Tanzanian Mennonites now are just like most evangelicals," Otieno says. "We must have some centers of training at which young Mennonites can learn Mennonite doctrine." A group associated with EMM called Friends of MTCEA supports the work of the theological college.

Creating congregational partnerships can fortif commitment—on both sides—to an Anabaptis understanding of the gospel.

Friends of Shirati, a nonprofit organization begun in 2005 by former missionaries, is another bridge between the Tanzanian and U.S. church. Working on projects proposed by hospital administrator Dr. Bwire Chirangi and hospital staff, Friends of Shirati has recently provided sterilizing units for the operating room and maternity ward, solar panels and a digital X-ray machine. With an estate gift, Friends of Shirati recently funded the digging of three wells in neighboring communities that are providing clean water to an estimated 15,000 residents. Water shortages remain a persistent challenge for the hospital itself, however, and the hospital administration is drafting a proposal for resolving this shortag for Friends of Shirati.

Additionally, Mennonite Central Committee works in partnership with KMT in conservation agriculture and food security, education and health care, and Mennonite Economic Development Associates has projects in agriculture and health in Tanzania.

Tanzanian Mennonites express concern that commitment to the Bible is eroding among Mennonites in the United States, and they caution against the allure of technological solutions to all problems.

Even as they welcome the support of Mennonites from other parts of the world for their ministries, Tanzanian Mennonites are also confident they have gifts to offer. They express concern that commitment to the Bible is eroding among Mennonites in the United States, and they also caution against the allure of technological solutions to all problems. "As you are moving on with changes in technology, this might sway people from the Word of God," says Zedekia Achoro, pastor of the Shirati Mennonite Church. "We'd like to advise Americans that they should not be swayed." In contrast to the technology-saturated services of many Mennonite churches in Canada and the United States, hundreds of Mennonite congregations in Tanzania have either no building or else simple structures with half walls or tarps as roofs. Many in the North Mara diocese, one of the most economically depressed regions of the country, still meet under a tree. "The environment in which Mennonite leaders are working in Tanzania has a lot of challenges," says deacon John Ojalla. "But all these do not keep us from carrying the Word of God."

One hundred Mennonite congregations now exist in the North Mara diocese alone, a number that would certainly have startled the early missionaries back in 1934. And in 2012, KMT and the Kenya Mennonite Church formed a joint mission board called International Mennonite Mission of East Africa; "We are no longer churches that just receive missionaries but churches that send missionaries," the church leaders state.

Even as Kisare moved from the edge of the crowd to the heart of church leadership, so have Tanzanian Mennonites moved to the center of their church's story and future. Still, Tanzanian Mennonites suggest there is a role for the churchly descendants of the early missionaries. "Relationships should come back," says John Nyagwegwe. "That is our cry."—*Valerie Weaver-Zercher, Mechanicsburg, Pa., is a managing editor at Herald Press. Her family lived and worked in Shirati during the 1960s and 1970s. She and her husband and three sons attend Slate Hill Mennonite Church.*

Shirati Mennonite Church was the first Mennonite congregation in East Africa.

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CALENDAR

Bethel College Fall Festival, North Newton, Kan., Oct. 18.

50th Anniversary Celebration, Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston, Kan., Oct. 17-19. Celebrating the move to Hesston from the rural location of the former Pennsylvania Mennonite Church (established 1886). Join pastors and former pastors, historian John Sharp, many musicians and many friends. Celebrate the ministry and mission of Whitestone with a weekend of worship, music, food and memories. For more information and to register, call the church 620-327-4123 or go to www.whitestonemc.com.

WORKERS

Beyene, Tilahun, was ordained as interim lead pastor and ongoing International Missions Association (IMA) ministry at Living Word Bible Fellowship, Poolesville, Md., on Aug. 13.

Grieser, Nathan, was licensed as youth pastor at Sunnyside Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on Sept. 14.

OBITUARIES

Bechtel, Jesse R., 90, Oley, Pa., died Aug. 19. Spouse: Catherine Eshbach Bechtel. Parents: Henry B. and Mary Reiter Bechtel. Children: Elaine Shirk, David, Glenn, Bruce; 11 grandchildren; 18 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 23 at Boyertown Mennonite Church, Boyertown, Pa.

Bontreger, AnnaBelle Nelson, 84, Goshen, Ind., died Aug. 10. Spouse: Harold L. Bontreger. Parents: Lewis H. and Winifred Long Nelson. Children: Tim, Kent; five grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 13 at Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Byler, Clara Yoder, 85, Hartville, Ohio, died Aug. 7. Spouse: Henry Byler. Parents: John J. and Emma Miller Yoder. Step-children: David Byler, James Byler, Ellen Wilson, William Byler; nine step-grandchildren; two step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 11 at Maple View Mennonite Church, Burton, Ohio.

Cline, Glen Rohrer, 84, Mt. Crawford, Va., died Aug. 16. Spouse: Betty Jean Heckendorn Cline. Parents: Russell D. and Mabel Rohrer Cline. Children: Nancy Mumbert, Cindy Cline, Gale Cline, Joseph, Paul, Charles; seven grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Aug. 19 at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

Detweiler, Walton N., 94, Souderton, Pa., died Aug. 14. Spouse: Verna Mae M. Godshall Detweiler. Spouse: Esther Halteman Detweiler (deceased). Parents: Nathaniel and Katie Nice Detweiler. Children: Marilyn Godshall, Gloria Detweiler, Laverne, Clyde, Ruthann Nyce, Sharon Martin, Leon Ray, Brian; 13 grandchildren; 25 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 28 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa.

Fisher, John J., 88, Goshen, Ind., died July 28. Spouse: Pauline Clemens Fisher. Parents: John J. Fisher, Jr., and Alma Warye Fisher. Children: Susan Fisher Miller, Margaret Aeschliman; five grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 2 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Gehman, David, 88, Millersville, Pa., died May 27. Spouse: Kathryn M. Garber Gehman. Parents: Jonathan and Mary Elle Martin Gehman. Children: Glen, Linda Gehman Peachey, Dan, Dawn Horst, Lois Omonde, June Gehman-Deane; 11 grandchildren; four great-grandchildren. Funeral: May 31 at East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.

Gerber, Titus, 97, Sugarcreek, Ohio, die June 9. Spouse: Mellie Gerber (deceased). Parents: Herbert and Amanda Gerber. Chi dren: Joan Miller, Marilyn Nussbaum, Dewey; 13 grandchildren. Funeral: June 1 at Walnut Creek Mennonite Church, Walnut Creek, Ohio.

Gerig, Eldon Lavern, 86, South Bend, Ind., died June 24, from complications of Parkinson's Disease. Spouse: Luella Joan Albrecht Gerig. Parents: Martin C. and Emma Nofziger Gerig. Children: Winston, Kevin, Nita Gerig Johnson; 11 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: June 29 at Kern Road Mennonite Church, South Bend.

Goodman, Harry Scott, Jr.,91, Lebanon, Ore., died Aug. 14. Spouse: Lila Goodman (deceased). Spouse: JoAnn Swa low Goodman (deceased). Parents: Harry and Beulah Wandling Goodman. Grandchildren: one step-grandson; one step-great-grandson. Funeral: Aug. 27 at Lebanon Mennonite Church.

Gotwals, Robert "Bob" S., 85, Souder ton, Pa., died Aug. 26. Spouse: Lucille Y. Yoder Gotwals (deceased). Parents: Clayton K. and Lillian Shueck Gotwals Kulp. Children: Susan M. Gotwals Lehman, R. Brent, Christopher K.; seven grandchildre one step-granddaughter; two step-great-granddaughters. Funeral: June 6 at Bloon ing Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Hofer, Glennis Schrag, 82, Freeman, S.D., died Aug. 30, of a massive stroke. Spouse: Kenneth L. Hofer (deceased). Parents: Ernest and Olga Miller Schrag. Children: Keith, Janeen Ogden, Marci Smith, Rocky; seven grandchildren; a number of great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 3 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Hooley, Marion M., 87, Goshen, Ind., died Aug. 19. Spouse: Marjorie Birky Hooley. Parents: Menno and Dora Mast Hooley. Children: Brad, Janet Kercher; four grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 25 at Miller-Stewart Funeral Home, Middlebury, Ind.

Hunsberger, Anna L. Weaver, 96, Goshen, Ind., died July 16. Spouse: John Hunsberger (deceased). Parents: Oscar and Inez Wenger Weaver. Children: Beverly Miller, Leroy, Richard; seven grandchildren. Funeral: July 21 at Olive Mennonite Church, Elkhart, Ind.

Kaufman, Virginia Ortman, 73, Parker, S.D., died Aug. 25, of failing heart and lungs. Spouse: Gene E. Kaufman. Parents: William and Anna Goering Ortman. Children: Kris Carlson, Kenton, Karin Kaufman-Wall; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 30 at Salem Mennonite Church, Freeman, S.D.

Koch, Martha Horst, 92, Goshen, Ind., died Aug. 25. Spouse: L Roy S. Koch (deceased). Parents: Menno and Lovina Bauman Horst. Children: Arlene Holdeman, Jane Oyer, Sheila Graber, Robert, Richard, Rodney; 18 grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 30 at East Goshen Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Kulp, Kathryn A. Moyer, 95, Souderton, Pa., died Aug. 21. Spouse: Francis B. Kulp (deceased). Parents: Harvey D. and Verda S. Alderfer Moyer. Children: Francis "Larry," John David, Mary Jane Godshall, Martha Jean Weaver; 11 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 28 at Souderton Mennonite Homes.

Lehman, Mary Veronica Shank, 93, Goshen, Ind., died Aug. 21. Spouse: Ernest W. Lehman (deceased). Parents: Charles and Crissie Yoder Shank. Children: Miriam Everest, Suzan Hutchison; four step-grandchildren; 11 step-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 25 at Yoder-Culp Funeral Home, Goshen.

Liechty, Doris Marie Grieser, 89, Archbold, Ohio, died Aug. 22. Spouse: Wesley Paul Liechty (deceased). Parents: Daniel and Rosa Beck Grieser. Children: Ruth Veley, Paul, Joyce Winzeler, JoAnn Liechty; six grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 31 at Fairlawn Haven Chapel, Archbold.

Martin, Ruth Leaman, 96, Goshen, Ind., died Aug. 30. Spouse: Enos G. Martin (deceased). Parents: M. Rohrer Leaman and Elizabeth Leaman Leaman. Children: Esther Gibble, Miriam Nichols, Jay; six grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 5 at Reith-Rohrer-Ehret Funeral Home, Goshen.

Nissley, Addona, 90, Harrisonburg, Va., died Aug. 23. Spouse: Mary E. Stauffer Nissley. Parents: Harvey S. and Emma Slabaugh Nissley. Chidren: A. Mark, Ruth Kidney, Tim; seven grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 19 at Lindale Mennonite Church, Linville, Va.

Nofziger, Bernita Mae Canoy, 86, Lebanon, Ore., died July 28. Spouse: Willard Nofziger. Parents: Wilbur George and Marie Tokstad Canoy. Children: Richard, Sharon Nofziger Terhaar; two grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 1 at Lebanon Mennonite Church.

Olson, Selma Esther Glanzer, 86, Freeman, S.D., died Aug. 2, of pneumonia. Spouse: Donald W. Olson. Parents: David and Susie Glanzer. Funeral: Aug. 6 at Hutterthal Mennonite Church, Freeman.

Richards, Emma Elizabeth Sommers, 87, Goshen, Ind., died Sept. 6. Spouse: E. Joe Richards. Parents: Monroe and Effie Horner Sommers. Children: Evan, Kathryn Beckwith, Lois Woods; nine grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 13 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Stoner, Mildred Linder, 97, Princeton, Ill., died May 30, of heart failure. Spouse: Stephen E. Stoner (deceased). Parents: Emil and Jenny Christophel Linder. Children: Kenneth, Donald. Funeral: June 4 at Norberg Memorial Home, Princeton.

Stutzman, Myrtle Luella Loucks, 90, Hesston, Kan., died July 21. Spouse: Orville Stutzman. Parents: Joseph S. and Clara Bitikofer Loucks. Children: Twila E., Bonita E., Carol Joy, Kent W.; seven grandchildren. Funeral: July 24 at Whitestone Mennonite Church, Hesston.

Tony, Katherine Ruth Fuquay, 56, Goshen, Ind., died Aug. 12. Spouse: Steve Tony. Parents: Melvin and Ruth Montgomery Fuquay. Child: Emily. Funeral: Aug. 18 at College Mennonite church, Goshen.

Troyer, Anna D. Miller, 82, Millersburg, Ohio, died Aug. 22. Spouse: David D. Troyer. Parents: Dan D. and Dala Troyer Miller. Children: Daniel "Trapper," Wayne, Richard, LeRoy; seven grandchildren, two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 24 at Walnut Creek Mennonite Church, Walnut Creek, Ohio.

Weaver, Richard Samuel, 94, Harrisonburg, Va., died July 27. Spouse: Virginia Elizabeth Grove Weaver. Parents: Henry David and Sallie Wenger Weaver. Children: Robert E., Ralph C.; two grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 30 at Weavers Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Yoder, Anna Barbara Cross, 82, Goshen, Ind., died July 19. Spouse: Irvin C. Yoder. Parents: Enos and Mattie Yoder Cross; Sarah Ann Bontrager Cross. Children: Rosa Marie Yoder, Marren Mark Yoder, Norma Ann Yoder, Loretta Sue Mast, Richard Irvin Yoder, Dwight Allen Yoder, Wesley Paul Yoder; 15 grandchildren; 13 great-grandchildren. Funeral: July 22 at Yoder-Culp Funeral Home, Goshen.

Zehr, Carolyn Marie Sommer, 83, Goshen, Ind., died July 27. Spouse: W. Jay Zehr. Parents: Raymond and Fannie Nafziger Sommer. Children: Eric, Brian, Jeff; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Aug. 2 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Advertising space in *The Mennonite* is available to congregations, conferences, businesses and churchwide boards and agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Cost for one-time classified placement is $1.30 per word, minimum of $30. Display space is also available. To place an ad in *The Mennonite*, call 800-790-2498 and ask for Rebecca Helmuth, or email advertising@themennonite.org.

Eastern Mennonite University seeks qualified applicants for a **full-time Director of Master of Arts in Education and Tenure-Track Faculty position**. The position is responsible for the vision, vitality, and every day functions of a successful and innovative NCATE-accredited multi-site program in graduate teacher education. This half-time administrative and half-time teaching position includes directing the Master of Arts main-campus-based program and collaborating with the Master of Arts in Education program director at Lancaster, Pa. The director is responsible for developing and promoting new programs, recruiting, advising incoming MA candidates, planning and evaluating curriculum, and formulating and managing budget within the program. The ability to work collegially as part of an integrated graduate and undergraduate program and compatibility with the department's mission, "to prepare competent, caring, reflective practitioners who value service to others, and teach boldly in a changing world through an ethic of care and critical reflection," is essential. Doctoral degree in education required. Submit application, curriculum vitae, transcripts (unofficial) and three letters of reference to: graduate@emu.edu. For more information visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanresources. Persons who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Lancaster Mennonite School is seeking an **editor/compiler** to work with a photographer to edit and produce a 75th-year photo history book of the school. This book will be a supplement and update to the 50th-anniversary book written by Donald Kraybill in 1991. The book will include new photos as well as selections from an archive of school pictures. Proposals should include a description of the organizational structure of the photo book. The goal is to release the book by the fall of the 75th year of operation, which begins in September 2016. Having an understanding of the history of the school and embracing the values of the school are desired. The vision is to organize the books by decades, with a theme that represents each decade. People from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups are encouraged to apply for the position. For more information please contact Rolando Santiago, 75th Anniversary Celebration chair, at 717-393-9745 or rsantiago@lmhs.org, or Dick Thomas, Superintendent, at 717-509-4459 ext 301 or thomasjr@lancastermennonite.org. Please provide a brief proposal (three-page maximum) describing how you would approach the project, a proposed budget and contact information for three current references. In addition, please include samples of your work. Proposals should be submitted to Joyce Thomas at thomasje@lancastermennonite.org by Nov. 1, 2014.

Eastern Mennonite University seeks qualified applicants for **Director of Master of Arts in Education at EMU Lancaster Campus**. The position is responsible for the vision, vitali and every day functions of a successful and innovative NCATE-ac credited graduate teacher education program. This half-time administrative position (can be combined with half-time teaching position to create a full-time position) directs the Master of Arts Lancaster Campus program and reports to and collaborates with the Master of Arts in Education program director at the main car pus, Harrisonburg, Va. The director is responsible for developing and promoting new programs, recruiting, advising incoming MA candidates, planning and evaluating curriculum, and formulating and managing budget within the program. The director is respon sible for Pennsylvania Department of Education and national CAEP accreditation of graduate programs. Doctoral degree in edu cation required. Submit application, curriculum vitae, transcripts (unofficial) and three letters of reference to: graduate@emu.edu For more information visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanr sources. Persons who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Landisville Mennonite Church, Landisville, Pa., is seeking a **full-time associate pastor of youth and young adults**. F more information, please contact the search committee at search@landisvillemennonite.org.

The **conference minister** for **Pacific Southwest Mennonit Conference** (PSMC) provides leadership and vision to support local congregations and pastors, nurture relationships with emer ing congregations and church plants, and strategize for mission from a uniquely Anabaptist perspective. This role is lived out in largely urban settings that are rich in ethnic and cultural diversit working alongside committed and innovative Christians. The pos tion is half-time and will begin Jan. 1, 2015. Applications for this position may be sent to Kathi Oswald at assist.moderator@Pacif southwest.org and are due Oct. 30, 2014.

Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford, Pa., is seeking a **full-time lead pastor** for a congregation with 450 active members We are looking for someone who has experience in providing leadership in developing, promoting and implementing a congregational vision and direction that is an expression of the Biblical vision and is led by the Holy Spirit. Please send resumé to Franco nia Mennonite Church, 613 Harleysville Pike, Telford, PA 18969 o email to mkratz@franconiamennonite.org. Contact can be made with the search committee chair person, Wayne L. Derstine at 21 588-5787.

EMM seeks **half-time planned giving officer** to conduct a planned/deferred giving program. Required: familiarity with EMM's stakeholders; experience with bequests, charitable gift an nuities and trusts. Apply by Oct 17; flexible start date. See www.emm.org/employment.

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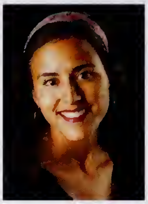
Hinkletown Mennonite School, Ephrata, Pa., is seeking a **director of advancement** to lead the school's fund-raising strategy and connection with donors in the community. Applicants must be committed to Christian education. At least three years experience working in a nonprofit preferred. Hinkletown Mennonite School is a private school in northern Lancaster County, Pa., providing faith-based education from an Anabaptist perspective to about 200 students in pre-K through grade eight. Send cover letter, resumé and application to Dawn Landes, Administrator, at dlandes@hmsk8.org.

Western District Conference seeks an **associate conference minister** to mentor pastors and resource churches in Texas and to network and support district-wide church-planting initiatives. Western District is looking for candidates with a deep commitment to the Mennonite church and to Anabaptist faith and values. M.Div or near equivalency expected. Church planting and/or pastoral ministry experience required. Multicultural, urban ministry background preferred. Texas location anticipated. Spanish helpful. A fuller job description appears at mennowdc.org. Please send cover letter, resumé and your Ministerial Leadership Information form to Clarence Rempel, Conference Minister, Western District Conference, P.O. Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117, or to clarencer@mennowdc.org. Individuals who bring diversity are welcome to apply.

Seattle Mennonite Church seeks an experienced **lead pastor** for our multistaff congregation with a strong commitment to Anabaptist theology and values, community development and involvement, radical hospitality and conference involvement. Seattle Mennonite is a publicly affirming congregation. A position description, including contact information, is available on www.seattlemennonite.org/leadership.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read **Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com, amazon.com or bn.com.

Peace can exist in the messy



Janet Trevino-Elizarraraz lives in San Antonio, Texas. She can be reached at alpasofirme@gmail.com.

Earlier this year, I committed to bringing you stories of non-Mennonite people of color that serve in Mennonite institutions and to offer you an opportunity to peek into their perspective within their work in Mennonite agencies. Unfortunately, the process to receive stories was more difficult than I had expected, and I'm moving on.

I've been contemplating the intersection between living in community and being an individual, and the messy space I've found in-between. The Mennonite culture upholds a strong communal sense. The culture of my grandparents and the family I married into also intrinsically honors sharing similar values and expressions of these values. I'm confident the majority of world cultures either historically and/or in the present rely on there being an agreed-upon way of living together in community. Peace seems to depend on there being a unified understanding on how to live and move and have our being.

There's this messy place that calls us to be in a community mindset, reminding us of the synergy of being together.

So what do we make of the individual that historically has been glorified as the backbone of American society? The rugged pioneer who leaves the comforts of home to settle an untamed land or the immigrant that sets sail across an ocean or through a desert to find a space where prosperity is possible. Does this individual exist or is it a mythical creature, an idea we've created to glorify our historical triumph? (Who's invisible strings to community made their story possible?)

And how is being aware of the mess between community and individual important for work in the church?

A personal example of how a group mind-set and the individual collide is when my family decides to take a vacation. That I'm a second-generation immigrant and my partner a first-generation one reveals our polarities.

We've encouraged our children to speak up for themselves and feel confident to share with us their preferences and needs. This is different from how I was raised because I subconsciously knew my voice was not as important as the group's voice, and my parents had the ultimate authority in decisions that affected the entire family.

In this moment when we have one child who wants to finish eating breakfast and another two who want to go swimming, it's easy for me to loo to my partner and ask him who he wants to accompany, leading to us split up as a family in the meantime. I assume there's a practical way to meet every individual's needs and believe this is the way for each person to be happy. He expresses another value that i foreign to me. His hope is that we all move from each activity together, waiting fo one another, patiently, doing the day together. He says th synergy makes us better together.

Now I bring this to the church. I see the values of a younger generation migrating away from their parents or an older generation's values, seeing them move in a different direction from wha the church has seen before, and I count myself among them. Even though my parents moved us away from the land of their birth, my migration has been to move away from a survivalist perspectiv into a new context of thriving in my unique self. I've felt that my departure has been an individualistic endeavor yet I've found community on the other side.

At the same time, there's this messy place tha calls us to be in a community mind-set, remindin us of the synergy of being together. As different as we are, and as hard as it can be, it can make us better over all.

We don't always need more pioneers that choose to leave the fold to create something new and we don't need a community that chooses to hold on to a dominant, unevolved identity for the sake of security. Somehow in the messiness of both we can find peace, for peace doesn't necessarily need like-mindedness and uniformity to exist. Peace can exist in the messy as well. TM

Boyhood confronts us with questions

The late-summer movie *Boyhood* has received a lot of attention for its uniqueness. It tells the story of a boy's life from age 6 to 18 and is filmed over a period of 12 years, The main actors in the film age as their characters age.

But the film is more than simply a unique approach to storytelling. It also confronts viewers with the poignant passage of time and how quickly our lives go by. This leads to questions about our mortality and what meaning our lives hold.

Boyhood does this without parading lessons about what is meaningful or philosophizing about life's problems. It does so by focusing on the (fictitious) story of a boy and his family, growing up in Texas in the early part of this century.

The film opens in 2002, when Mason Evans Jr. (Ellar Coltrane) and his older sister Samantha (Lorelei Linklater, the director's daughter) live with their single mother Olivia (Patricia Arquette). Their estranged father, Mason Sr. (Ethan Hawke), who's been gone for 18 months, visits them.

Olivia moves the family to Houston, where she goes to college. Later, she marries her psychology professor, and the blended family includes his son and daughter. An alcoholic, he becomes abusive, and Olivia takes Mason and Samantha and leaves.

As the years pass, Olivia becomes a college teacher and remarries. Mason Sr. also remarries and has a new baby. Mason Jr. is a quiet, introverted kid who moves from his interest in video games to girls to pot and, finally, to photography. His new stepfather and others tell him he needs to be more responsible and get a job rather than follow his obsession with photography.

Richard Linklater, who wrote and directed *Boyhood*, shot the film on 45 days, a few days each year, and he added to the script each year, inviting the actors to help in the writing.

Many of his films employ lots of realistic dialogue and occur in what feels like real time. His early film *Dazed and Confused* is set on the last day of school in a Texas high school. His trilogy of films, *Before Sunrise*, *Before Sunset* and *Before Midnight*, each occur over a period of a half day or so.

The characters in those films, as in this one, have plenty of flaws but feel real, even familiar. Mason's parents make many mistakes and even endanger their children at times. But they also love their kids and want to make their lives good.

Watching this family evolve over 12 years, we feel these tugs to do right, and we feel the remorse of making mistakes and hurting others.

The film is flawed as well, especially in the early years, when the actors are adjusting to one another. Some scenes ring false, such as one of a group of boys talking about sex and drinking when Mason is in eighth grade.

One of the lessons of good storytelling is to use the specific and local to get to the universal. *Boyhood* is an epic tale, yet it feels intimate. It captures a boy's life through a relatively few scenes that accumulate details and develop his character to the point where we feel we know him well.

Then we make connections to our own lives, even though we've lived in a different time and a different place.

How often do we look back at our own lives—or our children's lives—and think, Where did the time go? And we ask ourselves, What would we do different? What shall I do with the time I have left?

Boyhood is a film that helps us ask those questions while telling us an engaging story. TM

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

FILM REVIEW

Calvary (R) begins with a shocking scene in a confessional, where a man who was sexually abused as a child by a priest announces to the village priest (Brendan Gleeson) that he will kill him, a good priest, six days later. Gleeson is outstanding in his role. The middle of the film is somewhat cursory, touching on various topics related to religion, but the stunning ending redeems the film, which is aptly titled.—*Gordon Houser*

BOOK REVIEWS

Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians by John Paul Lederach (Herald Press, 2014, $14.99) is a revised and updated edition of *The Journey Toward Reconciliation* (1999), which was based on Lederach's work in 25 countries across five continents. Lederach calls his readers to "dream boldly and at the same time respond with an enthusiastic pragmatism that makes the dream a reality."—*gh*

Learning to Walk in the Dark by Barbara Brown Taylor (HarperOne, 2014, $24.99) explores the ways we fear the dark and the ways we can learn from it. Taylor goes spelunking in caves, learns to eat and cross the street as a blind person and looks in Scripture at the times God shows up at night. She writes that "suffering comes from our reluctance to learn to walk in the dark."—*gh*

Inspired: The Holy Spirit and the Mind of Faith by Jack Levison (Eerdmans, 2013, $24) and **Inspired: Study Guide** by Jack Levison and Ronald Herms (Eerdmans, 2014, $5) combines serious Bible study and Christian spirituality. Levison argues against dividing ecstatic expressions of the Spirit from learning or virtues. He says the Spirit of God is given to all flesh as part of creation and applies to all parts of our life, including the study of Scripture. The study guide offers helpful questions, summaries and suggestions for further study and reflection.—*gh*

(Continued from page 5)

read that is inspirational and challenging, I am glad *The Mennonite* appears only once a month.—*Wilma Shank, Goshen Ind.*

Faith and science can get along

I really hate to complain about a cartoon. It is usually one of my favorite bits of Miscellany in *The Mennonite* (September). Yet I find the basic message of the cartoon reinforces the notion that faith and science can't get along. Worse than that, it reinforces the myth that God creating and natural evolutionary process are somehow opposed to one another. That puts many Christians—especially the scientists among us— in a real—and unnecessary—bind.—*Michael Danner, Metamora, Ill.*

Mennonite entrepreneur

I loved the cover article on Eldon Hostetler and his wife, Esta (September). In the photo of them in the car, Eldon looks the same as he did to me when I was a kid growing up not far away (neighborhood friends) and as a fellow church member at North Goshen Mennonite Church. His inventions and patents were always a source of curiosity because otherwise he seemed like a normal father. We loved to go to their lovely home because they were some of the first people I knew to have a color TV. I'm happy to see more people knowing about this unusual Mennonite entrepreneur.—*Melodie M. Davis, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Include medical community

The current discussion of same-sex attraction has been centered primarily on biblical interpretation. Missing from the discussion are voices from the medical community. In December 2013, the American Psychiatric Association issued its official position statement on homosexuality. In summary, the APA position states: (1) The causes of sexual orientation (heterosexual or homosexual) are not known but likely are multifactorial. This includes biological and behavioral etiologies. (2) Same-sex orientation should not or need not be changed. Attempts to do so can cause harm when individuals are subjected to treatments not scientifically validated. Self-esteem can be seriously undermined when such treatments fail. (3) Discrimination against individuals with same-sex attraction occurs at all levels of society, including education, employment, spousal rights as well as others. This includes family, societal and religious stigma which can adversely affect the mental health of these individuals. (4) Same-sex marriage is seen as advantageous to the mental health of same-sex couples, and the APA supports the right for same-sex couples to marry (http://www.psychiatry.org/advocacy--newsroom/position-statements).

The APA position statement represents years of critical study, consultation of members and scientific inquiry. The American Medical Association and the Academy of Pediatrics have also issued statements of similar content and purpose. Such statements should be included in the discernment process by the Christian faith regarding same-sex attraction.—*John C. Stutzman, M.D., Bloomington, Ill.*

Thanks for thoughtful approach

Thanks to Bob Wyble (Letters, September) for the thoughtful approach used to discuss our current controversy on biblical issues. The difference between what the church did to Galileo in 1640 and what the church is trying to do around "gays in our midst" today is that we live on this side of science and we should know better. It took the church nearly 450 years to apologize to Galileo around the "biblical view" that the earth was the "unmoving" center of the cosmos.—*Jim Compton-Schmidt, Reedley, Calif.*

A possible direction

Is our current situation impossible? Hopefully not. But we may all need to reassess and take a new route that might satisfy many but not all.

1. Can we agree that decision-making from only a few, top down, is not satisfactory? Neither has decision-making from bottom up been effective

2. Might we try decision-making from inside out, where the congregation under the leadership of the appointed ministry and its overseer go through a process of discernment in dealing with an issue.

3. The church should deal with each issue with caring concern.

4. Each conference may then be given the option for a final decision.

5. This would free Mennonite Church USA to deal with unity in the larger community and promote congregational life, evangelism and mission, building the Anabaptist family into a Spirit-directed, Word-inspired part of the church at large.

6. This allows for area conferences to make decisions relative to their understanding of God's will for them.

7. If conferences disagree about solutions to issues, one should not feel guilt and withdraw from the church at large. Why splinter the family of Christ? God is able to deal with differing choices.

Let us all seek to move with the Holy Spirit. The results may be shocking and differ from our expectations. —*A. Don Augsburger, Harrisonburg, Va*

Do not judge harshly

I long for the day when the Mennonite church will spend as much time, money, paper and ink bringing people into the church as we have spent the last 20 years trying to keep LGBT people out. In that final day, for each of us, we're all on our own, and it won't mak any difference how people have judged us on earth—unless, woe to all of us, we have judged others too harshly. —*Helen N. Jantz, North Newton, Kan.*

Moving?
Contact Rebecca Helmuth
rebecca@themennonite.org
800-790-2498

Hopes for the delegate sessions

In my September column, I looked at the general role of delegates in Mennonite Church USA. In this column, I voice some hopes for the next year's delegate assembly at Kansas City.

This may well be a memorable assembly, since the delegates will be asked to address the question of same-sex relationships in the church, an issue the delegates haven't addressed directly since they adopted the Membership Guidelines in 2001. The need for this work is implied in several actions of the Executive Board, including both of the following (emphasis mine):

- that the denomination will not recognize licenses and/or ordinations offered by conferences to people living in same-sex relationships *unless the delegate body changes the stated polity on same-sex marriages*;
- that we engage all member congregations, initially via a survey of all credentialed ministers, in order to strengthen our common commitments in Christ *in preparation for a time of significant discernment of future direction by the delegates* at our biennial convention in July 2015.

The delegates may also be asked to give feedback to *A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership: Polity Manual for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA*. The latter is a major rewrite of *A Polity for Ministerial Leadership*, the shared document that guides the work of credentialed ministers in Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. The new ministerial polity includes the following statement, which is taken from the Membership Guidelines: "Pastors holding credentials in a conference of Mennonite Church USA may not perform a same-sex covenant ceremony. Such action would be grounds for review of their credentials by their area conference's ministerial-credentialing body."

The recent Executive Board actions related to the credentialing decisions in Mountain States Mennonite Conference were an attempt to be faithful to what the delegates of Mennonite Church USA have said, particularly in the Membership Guidelines. It has become clear that delegates across the church understood their vote on those guidelines in different ways, so the board believes it is time to let the delegates speak to some of those questions again.

As though the matters I have mentioned so far were not sufficient work for the delegates at Kansas City, there will surely be a number of proposed resolutions or church statements submitted to our Resolutions Committee for debate and possible adoption. I have heard delegates or interest groups propose resolutions regarding (1) peacemaking efforts in Israel/Palestine, (2) sexual abuse and its prevention, (3) the use of military drones and more. I will discuss these in more detail in a future column.

Because of the important nature of our work in 2015, I hope our delegates will truly represent our church. At most of our assemblies, less than half our congregations send a delegate. This may be true for a variety of reasons, one of which is the cost. Another reason is that many congregations feel distant from the business of the denomination or have little energy to spare outside their local program. I also hope that our delegates will represent a good range of ages. There are no specific rules about age, so congregations can appoint a range of people, from mature youth to senior members, to be delegates.

I hope our delegates will make their decisions through biblical/communal discernment. At the Phoenix assembly in 2013, we distributed a set of guidelines to help delegates engage in Spirit-led discernment. I'd like to see an even greater emphasis on the spiritual rhythms and practices that produce godly decisions.

I hope that our delegates engage in thoughtful discussion with their congregations regarding the issues before they come to the assembly, then stay in touch with them during the conference through prayer and various media.

I submit these hopes to the church and to God in a spirit of prayer and anticipation that God will be at work among us. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

I hope our delegates will make their decisions through biblical/communal discernment.

Mennonite Church USA

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The possibility of the impossible

Gordon Houser

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, … Now I know only in part.—1 Corinthians 13:12

We all see the world through lenses that are stained, cracked or askew. And sometimes, as Jesus shows us, we need to learn from those who are blind.

In John 9, one of my favorite passages in the Bible, we see how people's assumptions affect what or how they see. The disciples assume the blind man or his parents have sinned.

Jesus sees the man in a different light. Here, he says, is an opportunity to see God at work.

The neighbors can't believe it. It doesn't fit their worldview. And when the Pharisees hear who healed the man, they decide, This guy's a sinner who doesn't keep the Sabbath. According to their worldview, they're right, a person who doesn't keep the Sabbath can't be from God.

The blind man in this story is like the ideal disciple. He's truthful, focuses on his own experience, not on what it means, and he's courageous.

The Pharisees call the blind man back in and hint at what he needs to say. Remember, according to us, this man is a sinner.

This reminds me of when the police or other authorities question someone and say, Admit it, we know you're guilty. Just say it.

All the blind man has to do is say, Yes, he's a sinner, so he couldn't have healed me. But he won't go for it. He simply tells the truth. All I know, he says, is that I was blind, and now I see.

They want an explanation. How did Jesus do it?

And here is the funniest line in the story, maybe one of the funniest in the entire Bible: I already told you. Aren't you listening? Do you also want to become his disciples?

The Pharisees resort to categorization, a strategy many of us employ often. We know more than you. We come from better stock.

The blind man, with the clear eyes of innocence and logic, points out the contradiction he If Jesus is a sinner and not from God, how did h heal me?

Later, Jesus confronts the Pharisees. Becaus you say you see, you remain blind.

It should be obvious that this story is not rea about physical sight but spiritual sight. In fact, many blind people are more aware of what's around them than those of us who have sight.

It's easy to read this story and laugh at t Pharisees, but when I read it, I'm struck by how much like them I am. I, too, think I'm right mos of the time. And when I'm contradicted, I look f a way out, a way to categorize the one who disagrees with me, or I simply ignore what they sa

In his article "Seeing Our Blindness" (page 22), John C. Murray writes, "The biggest hindrance to new insight, new understanding and a deeper awareness of God's presence and activit in the world is what we think we already know."

One of the things my spiritual director asks m is, Where have you seen God active in your life This is what Jesus does in this story. While othe saw a man stuck in his blindness, someone they could go on ignoring, he saw a possibility. Derri calls God "the possibility of the impossible." I need to look for that possibility. I've learned tha when I look, I tend to see God's activity in ways don't when I don't look.

Jesus saw possibility. He even saw that spitti in the dirt and making mud can serve as a way t anoint a man and bring healing.

Mennonite Church USA is facing important d cisions as we examine our differences. We must look for the possibility of the impossible as we seek unity in the Spirit.

But seeing requires humility, realizing we oft don't know what we think we know. As Christia philosopher John D. Caputo says, "Faith is idola trous if it is rigidly self-certain but not if it is sof ened in the waters of doubt."—*gh*

Jesus saw possibility. He even saw that spitting in the dirt and making mud can serve as a way to anoint a man and bring healing.

A FORUM FOR THE VOICES OF MENNONITE CHURCH USA

TheMennonite

Growing peace

Myrna Krehbiel has left a legacy of peacemaking, from inner peace to fighting poverty.

November 2014

www.TheMennonite.org

INSIDE:
- Missionaries: Who needs 'em?
- Learning to love our bodies
- Don't repeat what has not worked
- Books help us be disciples of Jesus
- Our new website

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ON THE COVER: Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Stop paying for war

If your product is a weapon, your market is war. Now that the U.S. Congress has again acquiesced to war's profiteers by voting more aid for "moderate Syrian rebels," has the time come for U.S. citizens to withhold payment of that portion of their federal taxes that underwrite war and militarism?

Violence begets violence. In the current brutal conflict in Iraq and Syria, rooted in centuries of regional hostilities, the United States cannot intervene militarily without making a terrible situation even worse. Bombing will cause more bloodshed and instability and enable violent, antigovernment groups to recruit more supporters. Excepting the obscene profits of the weapons purveyors, this won't end well for anyone.

It was just a year ago that U.S. citizens resoundingly rejected war with Syria. Now, in the interest of peace, must we demand an arms embargo against all armed actors in Iraq and Syria, including the United States?

Paying for war is a form of participation in war. In the interest of peace, we need to urge the U.S. Congress to pass the Religious Freedom Peace Tax Fund Act (H.R. 2483, in the 113th Congress). When enacted, the bill will meaningfully address endless warfare and degrade an out-of-control military machine while restoring the rights of citizens whose conscience does not permit financial participation in war. —*Harold A. Penner, Akron, Pa.*

Allow congregations to innovate

A plea to the officers and credentials committees of the Indiana-Michigan Conference and Central District Conference and to area Mennonite pastors

This letter is from an informal grou of retired people in the Goshen, Ind., area, who met for its weekly informal coffee hour on Sept. 2. Though a diverse group, we have much in common. While our conversations "cover" a wide range of local, national and international issues, we have all been deeply involved in the church—as pastors, teachers, administrators and doctors. We hold no positions of power, an our voices are among many. We come from many local Mennonite congregations. Our diverse experiences in leadership give us a pool of information from which we draw, we are motivated by a deep concern for the welfare of th Mennonite church, and we empathize with the leaders in today's church.

A recent guest was Karl Shelly, a pastor whose credentials are under review by two conferences. He spoke quietly and informally, and we tried to listen and question carefully. After prayer together, we felt moved to express our concern and our care. While not all necessarily agree with Shelley's views, w regret that our faith heritage has allowed us to judge others and to think we are doing well when we split from them. This practice is so common that most elder leaders, including us, know how it feels to lead during times of tension or crisis. A review of our own experiences suggests that the denomination prospered most when conferences allowed congregations to innovate, even when at odds with policy adhered to by a majority of congregations.

We believe that we may learn how change can take place from our history of accepting divorced and remarried people; changes in the styles of bonnets, prayer coverings and other garb of both women and men; the use of mu sical instruments in the church and radios and TVs in the home; women in ministry. These changes took place congregation by congregation. Peaceful change, even in the midst of vigorous debate and some judgment, is not new to the Mennonite church.

Even though some members of our group do not agree with Karl's actions, and whether or not you agree with him, we ask that you preserve his ministry and honor the integrity of Assembly Mennonite Church in Goshen. In so doing, we believe that you will display the spirit of Christ, the wisdom of Gamaliel in Acts 5 and the need for time to do its healing work.—*Hilary Bertsche, John Lapp, Wilbur Birky, John Lederach, Don Blosser, Bob Lerch, J.R. Burkholder, Bill Mateer, Jacob Elias, Erwin Mellinger, Leonard Garber, Ed Metzler, David Gerber, Harold Metzler, Paul Gingerich, Al Meyer, Owen Hess, Bill Miller, James Horsch, Glen Miller, Jep Hostetler, Charles Mumaw, Arlin Hunsberger, Al Shelly, Glendon Jantzi, Ora Troyer, Marlin Jeschke, Hank Weaver, LeRoy Kennel, William Weybright, Myron Schrag, Martin Lehman*

Request to print article

I'm writing in response to a message I got this morning; that Anna Kathryn Shenk Eby's letter, describing her relationship with her brother Dan Shenk, was passed over for inclusion in the print version of *The Mennonite*.

I'd urge you to reconsider the decision to not include the letter. Regardless of what you or others at *The Mennonite* may believe about homosexuality, Anna Kathryn's letter was a touching and humanizing story about her relationship with her brother. If for no other reason than that it described the experience of two children of the Mennonite Church, it warrants inclusion in *The Mennonite*.

But on a deeper level than that, the issue of homosexuality is one that the Mennonite church is deeply engaged with at this time. Most of the rhetoric so far has served to divide the church; Anna Kathryn's letter is an example of dialogue that unites, as it reminds us of how the ties of family and church can matter far more than the things that divide us.—*Patrick Maxwell*

I was looking forward to Anna Kathryn Eby's article "Dare to be a Daniel" to come out in printed copy. I am disappointed that it has not been printed. Is there a chance that it might still come out in print? I feel that it needs to be read by the many folks who don't get the magazine online.—*Ruby Lehman Harrisonburg, Va.*

Editor's note: *We received 17 letters asking that we publish "Dare to Be a Daniel" by Anna Kathryn Shenk Eby in our print magazine. This article ran on our website and in* TMail *on Sept. 8. Go to www.themennonite.org/issues/17-9/articles/Dare_to_be_a_Daniel to read the article. Email tmail@themennonite.org to sign up to receive TMail, our free weekly, ezine. The article will run in our print magazine in a future issue.*

Request to print article

Missing in your most recent issue (October) in the story about Emma Sommers Richards is mention of the book about her, published in 2013 by the Institute of Mennonite Studies, *According to the Grace Given to Her: The Ministry of Emma Sommers Richards*.

This book, edited by three men—James E. Horsch, John D. Rempel and Eldon D. Nafziger—contains chapters by women and men who knew, admired and loved Emma and her husband, E. Joe. It also has a chapter by Joe and "My Timeline" by Emma. In addition, it includes after each chapter a tribute by

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

November is typically our mission issue, and this year is no different, although the focus is perhaps more subtle. Our feature story on community organizer Myrna Krehbiel demonstrates that antiwar work is best when individuals start first with inner peace. "Many people indicated that what was most important to them about peacemaking was seeking peace first inside themselves and with those closest to them," she says on page 13.

On page 17, Robert Brenneman argues that mission work does not need to be coercive or oppressive. He shares the ironic story of being "evangelized" by a Unitarian to make the point that good mission work begins with "gestures of hospitality and friendship."

Stanley Green's column on page 30 claims that the entire Bible tells of mission, and we are to "imagine our place in God's project." Finally, other articles throughout include inspirational stories of service and mission from agencies and colleges.

Geez magazine conducts a regular VIDA Count (vidaweb.org), a movement that enumerates the publication rates of men versus women in literary magazines. While we often fall short, this issue is impressive. In our features section, we boast that four out of the five articles are written by women.

News Analysis (pages 44-46) by John Longhurst outlines the challenges facing print publications like *The Mennonite* as well as our move from a print publication to a "content-distribution system," with digital content leading the way.

Therefore, it is timely that our new website launched in October. See the editorial on page 56 for more details. We invite you to check it out immediately at www.themennonite.org. Send questions and feedback to annag@themennonite.org.—*Editor*

Photo courtesy EMU's Black Student Union

EMU faculty and staff appeal for justice

On Sept. 5, 27 faculty, staff and students of Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., gathered to raise their hands in solidarity with the African-American community of Ferguson, Mo., where 18-year-old Michael Brown was shot and killed by a white police officer on Aug. 9. An EMU faculty member, seminary professor David Evans (front-left in white shirt), and top administrator, vice president of enrollment Luke Hartman (directly behind Evans), joined 25 students to produce the #DontShoot photo.—*EMU*

Clinton Brick Church leaves Indiana-Michigan

TUCSON, Ariz.—On Oct. 1, Clinton Brick Mennonite Church, Millersburg, Ind., removed its membership from Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference and Mennonite Church USA due to the increase it sees in LGBT inclusion in the conference and denomination.

At a congregational meeting on July 13, a majority of Clinton Brick members voted to leave the conference and denomination, according to a statement from the church dated Oct. 8.

Clinton Brick members made this decision after a seven-month process. According to an *Elkhart Truth* article, about 50 people regularly attend Clinton Brick.

Church leaders removed "Mennonite" from the name, and the new name is "Clinton Brick Church."

"As we look to the future we will seek God's face and direction as to our identity and formal name," reads the statement.

The statement was signed by Dave Hathaway, pastor; Cliff Miller, overseer; and elders Stan Miller, Don Haarer and Mitch Stutzman.

Another Indiana-Michigan congregation, Clinton Frame Mennonite Church, left Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference in July.—*Anna Groff*

Weyburn Groff, mission worker, dies at 92

HAMPTON, Va.—Weyburn W. Groff, 92, died Oct. 2, Mahatma Gandhi's birthday, a fitting time, as both lived and taught the way of peace. Groff died in Goshen, Ind., surrounded by family. His memorial service was Oct. 11 at College Mennonite Church in Goshen.

Groff was born Oct. 15, 1921, and raised in New Hamburg, Ontario. He was highly respected as a mission worker, an academic and a church leader.

Groff and Thelma, his wife, served in India for more than 20 years through Mennonite Board of Missions, a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network. Groff was one of the founders of Union Biblical Seminary in Yeotmal, Maharashtra, where he taught Christian education. He was pastor of Floradale Mennonite Church in his native Ontario. In 1965, he joined the faculty at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind., and served as registrar, retiring in 1986.

In 1989, Weyburn and Thelma Groff became pastoral counselors for Mennonite Central Committee service workers throughout Southeast Asia.
—*Mennonite Mission Network*

MDS group responds to tornado damage in West Virginia

HARRISONBURG, Va.—An Early Response Team (ERT) from the Harrisonburg area responded to a tornado-damaged county in West Virginia. Rodney Burkholder, Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) Region I secretary, and five volunteers cleaned up trees and debris in Ghent, W.Va., after tornados hit on Oct. 7.

During their 36-hour whirlwind work trip Burkholder, reports, "Structural damage was minimal but tree damage was overwhelming."

The MDS ERT group was asked to work in Ghent by the West Virginia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, in response to a request for help by the Emergency Services Department in Raleigh County.—*MDS*

Bringing 'the Book' to life

WINNIPEG, Manitoba—Ken Quiring and Pam Nightingale are using an ancient approach to solve a new problem. They are returning to the historical tradition of oral storytelling to share Scripture in an age where Biblical literacy is on the decline.

In 2012, Quiring, pastor of Grace Mennonite Church in Brandon, Manitoba, attended the Annual Gathering of the Indianapolis-based Network of Biblical Storytellers. The costs of studying with the Academy of Biblical Storytelling were beyond Grace's budget.

A search for outside grants brought Quiring $3,000 from Mennonite Church Canada's Company of 1000 and $1,000 from Mennonite Church Manitoba.

Nightingale, an early childhood education instructor at Assiniboine Community College, says children are natural storytellers. When she introduced the story of Daniel during worship, one child said that he knew the story. Nightingale invited his help, and all the children joined in, adding parts that they could recall. "It became a group storytelling where one child picked up where the previous one left off. It was a wonderful experience." *—Mennonite Church Canada*

Photo provided

Skydiving pastor

Pastor Barb Goering of Manhattan (Kan.) Mennonite Church joined other women from the congregation at the annual "Bag Lady" dinner—a fundraising event for the local homeless shelter. The final auction item was a certificate for tandem skydiving with the Kansas State University Parachute Club. The women purchased the certificate for the high bid of $350, on the condition that Goering perform the skydive. It went smoothly, and about $2,500 has been raised for the new church building from this event.*—Richard Goering*

Jim Bishop

Oh, what a relief (sale) it is!

Delight Tigoe, an Eastern Mennonite University student from Ghana, and some of her classmates, were among the volunteers who helped make and sell 13,000 donuts at the 48th annual Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale Oct. 3-4 in Harrisonburg.*—Jim Bishop*

Goshen students win computer programming competition

GOSHEN, Ind.—Two Goshen College students recently won first place in the Consortium for Computing Sciences in Colleges (CCSC) Midwest programming competition on Sept. 20 at Olivet Nazarene University, Bourbonnais, Ill.

Twenty-nine teams participated in the contest. The winning team from Goshen College included Maria Jantz, a senior physics and interdisciplinary double major from North Newton, Kan., and Seth Yoder, a senior music and informatics double major from Quakertown, Pa.

In the contest, students were given up to six computer programming problems, to solve as many as possible in four hours. The team who completed the most problems that were approved by the judges in the least amount of time was named the winner. Jantz and Yoder completed five of the problems.

Neither Jantz nor Yoder are computer science majors—Jantz studies physics and Yoder studies music and informatics—but both are drawn to programming because of the challenge it provides.*—Goshen College*

Philhaven, WellSpan Health explore affiliation

MT. GRETNA, Pa.—The leaders of Philhaven and WellSpan Health have agreed to explore an affiliation that would bring together the two organizations' behavioral and mental health services as part of WellSpan Health's nonprofit, community-based system of care. Both governing boards have approved a Memorandum of Understanding, which is a nonbinding agreement that outlines a potential affiliation.

Philip D. Hess, CEO of Philhaven, and WellSpan Health President and CEO Kevin H. Mosser say the proposed affiliation would combine the talents of the behavioral health leaders and clinicians of Philhaven and WellSpan Health in order to develop an integrated system of behavioral health to serve the region while enhancing local systems of care in York, Adams, Lancaster and Lebanon counties in Pennsylvania.*—Philhaven and WellSpan Health*

Getting along in the same house

Ron Adams is pastor of Madison (Wis.) Mennonite Church.

My wife and I lived with her parents for many years. We sold our place and built an addition onto their home. Our sons were in elementary school when we moved in. They were young adults by the time we moved out.

Those were good years. Oh, we had our moments of tension and disagreement. I know we often drove my wife's parents crazy, and they did the same to us. But for the most part our living arrangement was happy and harmonious, and we genuinely enjoyed being together.

Looking back, I can see the many times we made compromises and kept our mouths shut for the sake of the household. Each of us, our sons included, had to learn to tolerate and work around each other's quirks and preferences. We learned to put up with each other at our worst. And we did so more or less willingly. But always with an awareness of our love for each other and our commitment to making the best of our time together.

I know families are not denominations. It would be foolish to even attempt to make the analogy, but I am going to anyway.

That sounds easy, perhaps. Trust me, it wasn't. Not because any one of us were difficult or troubled or recalcitrant or bad but because we were individual human beings, with all the diversity that comes with the species.

For example, I am an introvert, in a serious sort of way. Being alone does not bother me. In fact, I like it. A lot. I firmly believe that silence is golden.

My father-in-law was an extrovert's extrovert. He was textbook. Loud and welcoming and generous and always ready for a good talk. He was affectionate and laughed easily. He enjoyed nothing more than a house full of family, friends and guests.

We were very different, my father-in-law and I. We thought differently, viewed the world differently, behaved differently and had different likes and dislikes. What energized him exhausted me. I never did understand his love of a crowded house. I suspect he never got my need for solitude.

Yet we lived together for years. We shared a kitchen and ate together almost every evening. We had our separate spaces, but we held most o the house in common. And we managed to stay together for years, sometimes gritting our teeth through our differences.

It's important to know that we were only two of the seven who typically lived in our house. Seven people together day after day, for years. Each of us different. Each of us is unique. Each c us is capable of annoying the fool out of the othe Each of us is capable of making it work and wor well. It was its own sort of miracle.

In this month of Thanksgiving, I am especially grateful that our sons shared our years of communal living. Our sons grew up surrounded by loving adults (and believe me, they often felt surrounded) They watched us adults as we moved with and around each other in that special dance that makes a household thrive. They saw first-hand how love and a common commitment can overcome a multitude of sins.

I know families are not denominations. It would be foolish to even attempt to make the analogy, but I am going to anyway. Because i seems to me that the same love and common commitment that kept our combined household healthy and happy ought to be enough to hold ou Mennonite Church USA together, despite our diversity.

I realize there is a big difference between a group of seven and a group of 100,000. I know th not everyone will be able to stick it out. I know that the stretching necessary to stay together w seem impossible for some. And while that's sad, it's OK. It's a denomination, not a prison. Still, I' like to think that if we truly love one another an are committed to remaining in communion, we can find a way.

Staying together will require a lot of accommodation and compromise. Probably a fair amount o tolerance, too. But wouldn't it be wonderful to look back someday and tell our children, It wasn easy, but we managed to stay together?

'Meno-Latino' identity

In his new book, *Latino Mennonites: Civil Rights, Faith and Evangelical Culture* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), Mennonite historian Felipe Hinojosa narrates a complex story of the Latino Mennonite church in North America and its ongoing struggle for identity and faithful witness during the past eight decades.

In the early 1930s, Mennonite missionaries initiated an outreach to various Spanish-speaking communities in Chicago and South Texas, and shortly thereafter to communities in Puerto Rico and New York City as well. The gospel shared by these Mennonite missionaries included a high view of Scripture, an active ministry of prayer and an eagerness to share the Good News with others. But most of the Latino churches that emerged from these ministries also hosted voluntary service units that supported maternity clinics, kindergartens and after-school programs. And a generation of leaders that emerged from these congregations were eager to find their place in the denominational structures of the (Old) Mennonite Church.

Hinojosa charts the complexities of being "Meno-Latino" in the decades that followed. Drawn into the political activism of the Civil Rights movement, Spanish-speaking Mennonites developed a new language to address issues of economic injustice, ethnic identity and racism. Along the way, they also forged a distinctive cultural identity, negotiated with African-American Mennonites for resources and representation, created space for an active Latina women's movement, struggled to understand the larger organizational structures of the Mennonite Church and welcomed dozens of new Spanish-speaking congregations into the denomination.

The sustained intercultural encounter with the growing number of Latino Mennonites had a profound impact on the (Old) Mennonite Church in the second half of the 20th century. Among other things, it compelled white Mennonites to reconsider their relationship with American society, politics, religious activism and their own racial identity. "Most white Mennonites," Hinojosa observes, "know more about the origins of their religious movement in 16th-century Europe than they do about the struggles of Latinos and other people of color in the 20th century. Yet it is precisely those struggles that helped usher in a religious transformation in the Mennonite Church."

That transformation is clearly an ongoing process. From the very beginning, "Meno-Latino" identity included a strong connection to the evangelical world. "Being Latino Mennonite," writes Hinojosa, "also meant being part of a larger family of *evangelicos* that included their Pentecostal and mainline Protestant neighbors."

On Aug. 8-9, pastors and church leaders in the Iglesia Menonita Hispana (IMH) gathered for their biennial assembly. At the meeting, the group strongly affirmed the wording of the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* that "God's intention is that marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman for life," and they expressed concern about a widening gap between this affirmation of a long-standing position on sexuality and actual practice in some Mennonite conferences. In a Sept. 18 letter, Samuel Lopez—the moderator of IMH and, in 1980, the first graduate of the Hispanic Ministries Program at Goshen (Ind.) College—called on Mennonite Church USA leaders "to keep ... and to enforce" the teaching position of the church. The letter concluded that "most, if not all, of the Hispanic Mennonite churches will withdraw from MC USA if the present teaching of sexuality [in the] Confession of Faith is changed."

Among the many painful realities of our current ecclesial tensions is the fact that racial-ethnic minority churches who once regarded Mennonite progressives as natural allies in the struggle for racial and economic justice now find themselves increasingly alienated from those leaders.

What the future holds for this relationship is unclear. Will it be possible for all sides to remain committed to this long and shared history? If relations are now too frayed to support an appeal to "more dialogue," could we at least commit ourselves to a "reweaving of relationships" that would maintain some level of association with each other?

In the closing lines of *Latino Mennonites*, Hinojosa suggests that it is "often in the spaces between belonging and exclusion where the politics of religious life compel us to work for what is possible." What might that look like?

Latino Mennonites is a timely book. It appears at a crucial moment in the history of a long relationship. And its analysis of intercultural dynamics, cross-cutting theological currents, and racial realities make it highly relevant for the global Anabaptist-Mennonite church as well. TM

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

Racial-ethnic minority churches who once regarded Mennonite progressives as natural allies in the struggle for racial and economic justice now find themselves increasingly alienated from those leaders.

Those neglected middle schools

It's fall, and students are back in school. People who want to fix education, or at least improve it, often focus on "dropout factory" high schools or access to pre-kindergarten instruction. But middle schools tend to get ignored.

In "Bad Grades" (*Pacific Standard*, September/October), Dana Goldstein reports on studies done on middle schools and points to ways they can better meet the needs of the students within them.

A recent study from the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign of 1,400 Midwestern middle schoolers "found that about a fifth of students reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment, bullying or abuse, often within the classroom," Goldstein writes.

Another study showed that 28 percent of Taiwanese eighth and ninth graders earned scores on a math test that placed them at an accomplished level, while only 6 percent of U.S. eighth and ninth graders did.

But don't blame the students, says Goldstein. Middle schools are poorly designed to meet their students' needs. Five studies, however, provide some hope.

1. Accept that middle schoolers are adolescents. "Today," writes Goldstein, "puberty's onset is happening months and often years earlier than it did in the 1960s." The most likely cause of this change is diets high in fat and processed sugar. "Early puberty," she writes, "is associated with depression, misbehavior, academic struggle and sexual initiation at a younger age."

Middle schools should provide a supportive environment and, writes Goldstein, "because the adolescent brain is not at its best in the early morning, the opening bell should ring closer to 9 a.m. than to 7 or 8."

2. Crack down hard on truancy. A study of sixth graders in Philadelphia found that, "of the students who failed either English or math in sixth grade, less than a quarter went on to graduate high school." And poor attendance drives academic failure.

3. Hire better-educated teachers and give them reasons not to quit. "Since the middle school years have a crucial impact on children's later success," writes Goldstein, "middle school teachers should be among the most elite and highly paid educators in K-12." They should have better training and be given incentives to stay, like higher salaries, says Goldstein.

4. Focus on character as much as book learning. Goldstein writes that "the best middle school curricula teach kids coping mechanisms that can be applied both to completing schoolwork *and* to navigating adolescent friendships and dating."

One promising program, Habits of Mind, helps students develop skills such as "applying past knowledge to new situations," "admitting you don't know," "listening with understanding and empathy," "taking responsible risks" and "being able to laugh at yourself."

5. Or get rid of middle school entirely. A growing number of school reformers believe it makes no sense to isolate sixth, seventh and eighth graders in separate school buildings.

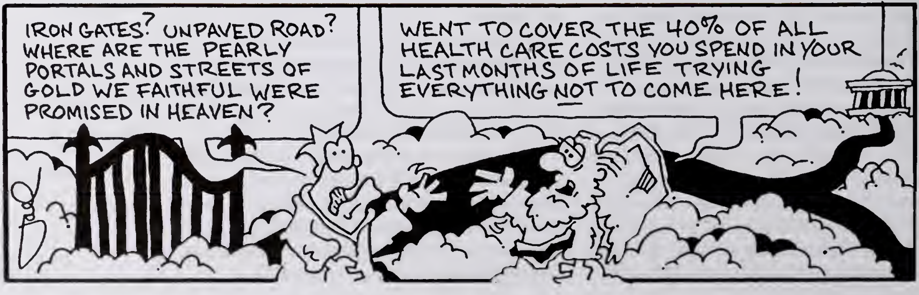
One study of children in Florida found that, "across urban, suburban and rural areas, students who attend middle schools do worse academically than peers who attend K-8 schools and are more likely to drop out of high school," writes Goldstein.

In response to these findings, she writes, "hundreds of middle schools across the country, especially in cities, are transitioning to K-8 formats."

According to these studies, teaching middle school is a high calling and needs all the support it can get, because it affects the lives of many of our children.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


IRON GATES? UNPAVED ROAD? WHERE ARE THE PEARLY PORTALS AND STREETS OF GOLD WE FAITHFUL WERE PROMISED IN HEAVEN?
WENT TO COVER THE 40% OF ALL HEALTH CARE COSTS YOU SPEND IN YOUR LAST MONTHS OF LIFE TRYING EVERYTHING NOT TO COME HERE!

© Pontius.com

—*compiled by Gordon Houser*

> “Every increase of one letter in the average length of words describing a dish is associated with an increase of 69 cents in the price of that dish.”

—Dan Jurafsky in *The Language of Food: A Linguist Reads the Menu*

Nonviolence is more effective than violence

Between 1900 and 2006, nonviolent campaigns against authoritarian regimes were twice as likely to be successful as violent, according to an article in *Foreign Affairs* (July/August). Nonviolent campaigns also increase the likelihood that a peaceful, democratic government will emerge. Successful nonviolent campaigns draw widespread, diverse participation, elicit defections from the regime and employ flexible tactics. Spontaneous nonviolent campaigns are rarely successful; planning and coordination are required. Outside countries are often at a loss to know how best to support nonviolent movements for change. People within those movements know best what, if anything, from the outside could be useful.—*Christian Century*

20%
of adults have tattoos.

40%
of 30-somethings have tattoos.
—*The Marketplace*

A woman’s influence

Adding a woman to a male board of directors improves corporate governance, says Simon Fraser University business professor Judith Zaichkowsky. Her research found that even one woman can make a difference in encouraging more focus on board practices and behaviors related to good governance. Groups of males generally “behave better” when a female is present, she writes in the *International Journal of Business Governance and Ethics*.—*The Marketplace*

43%
of homes with guns and kids have at least one unsecured firearm.

52
children killed themselves or others in 2013 after coming across loaded guns.—*Mother Jones*

Mental illness rarely addressed by churches

Protestant clergy rarely preach about mental illness to their congregations, and only one-quarter of congregations have a plan in place to assist families of the mentally ill, a new LifeWay Research survey found. When it comes to mental illness, researchers found:

- 66 percent mention it rarely, once a year or never
- 26 percent speak about it several times a year
- 4 percent mention it about once a month
- 3 percent talk about it several times a month.—*Religion News Service*

Immigration impact on U.S. churches

According to the 1990 Census, 19.7 million people in the U.S. were born in another country. By 2010, that number had jumped to 43 million—74 percent of them Christian (compared with 5 percent Muslim, 4 percent Buddhist and 3 percent Hindu). Immigration’s overwhelming religious impact has been to inject expanding diversity and fresh vitality into the country’s Christian community.
—*Religion News Service*

Returning to religion

According to sociologist Philip Schwadel at the University of Nebraska, “Americans born in the late 1920s and ’30s who graduated from college were twice as likely to drop out of religion as people who didn’t graduate from college.” However, for the generation born in the 1960s, there’s no difference between those who did and those who did not go to college in their likelihood of religious affiliation. Among those born in the 1970s, “those without a college education are the most likely to drop out.” Schwadel did not include millennials—Americans roughly between the ages of 18 and 30—in the study because, he said, it’s too soon to tell if they will settle on a religious identity.
—*Christian Century*

Numbers to ponder

- Driest year in recorded history for many areas of California: **2013**
- Percentage by which California Gov. Jerry Brown asked Californians to voluntarily reduce water use in January: **20**
- Actual percentage reduction in water use in California between January and May: **5**
- Percentage of children ages 3-5 below the federal poverty level with untreated tooth decay: **25**
- Percentage of children ages 3-5 above the federal poverty level with untreated tooth decay: **10.5**
- Percentage of Americans without health insurance as of September 2013, the highest since Gallup began: **18**
- Percentage of Americans without health insurance as of June, the lowest since Gallup tracking began: **13.4**
- Total number of newly insured Americans since the Affordable Care Act was signed into law: **15 million**

—*Yes! Magazine*

Growing peace

Myrna Krehbiel has left a legacy of peacemaking, from inner peace to fighting poverty.

by Laurie Oswald Robinson

Myrna Krehbiel Photo provided

Peace Connections in 2001 wanted to collaborate with the community in developing a Giving Garden to provide produce for Salvation Army. So the City of Newton, Kan., loaned the use of a plot at Sixth and Pine streets near Newton's railroad tracks. The fact that it had been a burial ground for throwaways and trash didn't keep Myrna Krehbiel, who retired as director of Peace Connections in June, from remaining hopeful. She believed the transformation of anything—whether it be turning hard ground into green vegetables or pain into peace—was possible if people talked to and listened to each other.

"We don't need to run away from our anger and fear," said Myrna during a mid-August interview at her home in North Newton, Kan. "Instead, we can accept our emotions and honor them by dealing with them honestly. That helps turn our paralyzing negativity into nurture, curiosity, courage and new capacity." The Giving Garden is a good example, she said. "It was so packed down, and we dug up old car and doll parts and doorknobs. After we worked leaves, straw and compost into the soil, it loosened up so we could plant vegetables. And now, each year, under the care of Harvey County Extension master gardeners, the garden yields about three tons of vegetables to be shared with others."

When Myrna became director in 2000, her commitment to transformation enlarged the "field" of the Newton Area Peace Center. It was established in 1983 to protest the transportation of nuclear warheads by train through Newton. The center was situated above Druber's Donut Shop on Sixth Street. On Myrna's watch, the organization moved onto Main Street, changed its name to reflect a new focus and grew from a budget of $25,000 to $130,000. Its resource base broadened from 14 Mennonite congregations and one Episcopal congregation to 25 churches across the ecumenical spectrum, 13 businesses and five organizations. It also increased its individual donor base.

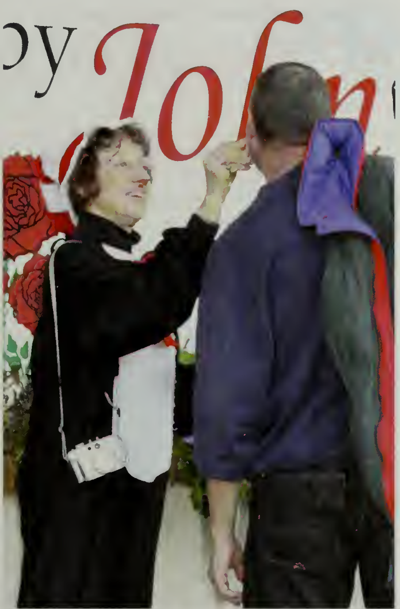
Moving from outer to inner peace

During her tenure, the organization added the Giving Garden, the Summer Food and Activity Program, Circles of Hope, which addresses poverty and class issues (see companion story), Season for Non-Violence activities and compassionate communication workshops. Also added were a gift shop, a room for prayer and reflection, card making and Lenten gatherings.

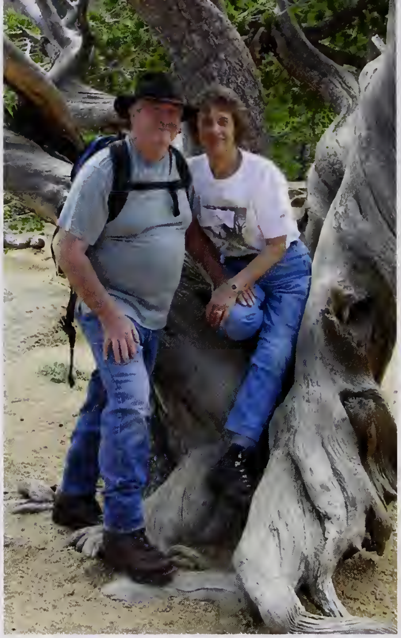
The root of this expansion was the decision to change its focus from antiwar to pro-peace, she said. "My first year I spent a lot of time listening to people," Myrna said. "Many people indicated that what was most important to them about peacemaking was seeking peace first inside themselves and with those closest to them. This resonated with me. I knew that change takes time. And to stay in it for the long haul, I would have to give serious attention to what peacemaking means in terms of what it stands for, not against. One of my favorite descriptions of peace is that it fosters openmindedness, openheartedness and openhandedness. That is my guiding principle."

At the heart of peace for Myrna was building stronger bridges between the organization and the community, she said. She believed that many people had reservations about the peace movement because they did not see the peace they sought in the peacemakers themselves. Myrna wanted to help transform reservation into receptivity. "We are to love our enemies and to do good to those who curse us," she said. "What our enemies deserve is not our rejection or disdain but our love."

> To stay in it for the long haul, I would have to give serious attention to what peacemaking means in terms of what it stands for, not against.
> —Myrna Krehbiel



Myrna Krehbiel applies face paint at a Peace Connections event. Photo provided



Myrna and Randy Krehbiel, her husband, on a hike in Colorado. Photo provided

Sowing core values within a Mennonite farm community

These core values were sown in Myrna in her Mennonite farm family, where she grew up the oldest of three children born to the late Walter and Edna (Funk) Gaede in rural Hillsboro, Kan. The family belonged to Johannestal Mennonite Church, where Myrna was formed in following Jesus' way of peace. In high school and college, she volunteered on Cheyenne reservations in Montana and in Oklahoma and in African-American communities in Gulfport, Miss., and Atlanta. She also led work camps for a mental health organization in Pennsylvania and at Tot Lots in Winnipeg, Manitoba. "I was grounded in service and humility and caring for people who were different from me," she said. "There were so many structures set up for me that nurtured my heart and helped me in my faith walk."

> There were so many structures set up for me that nurtured my heart and helped me in my faith walk.—Myrna Krehbiel

Her service orientation continued after she graduated from Bethel College in North Newton in 1968 in elementary education. She taught her first year in inner-city Minneapolis and the next two years in an all-black school in south Chicago. In 1969, she married Randy Krehbiel, who graduated from Bethel in social work, with whom she raised two sons, Aaron and Matthew. The couple co-directed Mennonite Marriage Encounter for the United States and Canada in the former General Conference Mennonite Church in the mid-1980s. Myrna later served as the bereavement and volunteer coordinator for a hospice agency. "My work there in family education, relationship building, and recruiting and training volunteers was a theme I carried into Peace Connections," she said. "There is only so much one person or organization can do. However, if you harness the efforts of volunteers, then the possibilities are endless."

Leaving a legacy

Her vision for empowering others to see the possibilities and to cooperate in making dreams realities are her legacy, said a former administrative associate and three volunteers during recent phone interviews. "Myrna had vision for what Peace Connections might accomplish, persistence in pursuing that vision and the strong desire and ability to promote collaboration," said Steve Richards, a member of a United Methodist Churc in Newton who has served as a volunteer since 2000. He helped launch Circles of Hope in 2009 through local, regional and national United Methodist programs and resource support.

Richards was one of many volunteers Myrna attracted from a wider ecumenical circle. Many Mennonites were also engaged, including Marlene Smucker, Stan Bohn and Amy Schmidt. Smucker, manager of the gift shop for 12 years, said, "We had a lot of good conversations with people who came in as customers and then asked what we did here and shared some of their personal journey. We felt this was a part of fostering inner peace and was better than going out and knocking on doors to share the message."

Myrna directed her inner, pro-peace focus outward by addressing poverty in the community as well as other issues, said Bohn, a former pastor and a board member for 10 years, who spearheaded the annual phone-a-thon fund-raiser. Her work with poverty, which began in 2001, culminated in the start of Circles in 2009. "She showed us how it opened the doors for others to work for peace in a way we had not expected," he said.

"Those opposed to military participation continued their efforts, and Peace Connections helped by including in its mailing the annual pie chart that showed how much of the U.S. budget was used for war rather than community needs."

Schmidt, an administrative associate from 2004 through 2010 and now a fourth grade teacher, said, "Myrna helped me see the importance of developing peace within your own heart, mind and body before going out into the world to work at creating peace."

Today, Myrna is renewing her own inner peace as she rests for a season from her labors, grieves the losses that come with retiring and spends time with family, including three granddaughters. Though she is uncertain of what lies ahead, she knows one thing, she said. The first "plot of ground" she is called to tend is her own soul, where she is growing the peace she desires to share.

"Peace has to start within me, and I can't spend most of my time telling you how high to jump on the way up, because I have enough work to make sure I am nurturing compassion and love on a daily basis," she said. "Scott Peck in his book *The Road Less Traveled* writes that love always requires courage and involves risk. This doesn't have to happen in big, dramatic ways but in everyday small ways—knowing who you are, accepting who you are and forgiving."

> Peace has to start within me, and I can't spend most of my time telling you how high to jump on the way up, because I have enough work to make sure I am nurturing compassion and love on a daily basis.—Myrna Krehbiel

Laurie Oswald Robinson is a free-lance writer in Newton, Kan., and the author of Forever Family.

Circles of caring forge new futures

When Jennifer Rose cared for children at the Circles of Hope meetings sponsored by Peace Connections, she had no clue that two years later she would care for the entire organization.

In 2012, Rose left her volunteer post as childcare coordinator Tuesday evenings at First United Methodist Church in Newton, Kan., so she could pursue her master's degree in social work. Before that, as part of her undergraduate practicum, she worked for Com Care of Sedgwick County, a nonprofit agency in Wichita that helps people with mental-health and substance-abuse needs improve the quality of their lives. That's where she thought she would do her graduate practicum, followed by possible employment.

Instead, she accepted an invitation to fulfill her graduate practicum at Peace Connections in August 2013. And in January, she was asked to become coordinator for Circles, part of a national campaign and the first local initiative in Kansas as well as Peace Connection's largest program. The Circles® Campaign brings together volunteers and community leaders with families wanting to move out of poverty. In April, when Myrna Krehbiel, former executive director for Peace Connections, was transitioning into retirement (see story, page 12), Rose became acting director for Peace Connections in addition to being Circles coordinator. In July 1, she was appointed executive director to oversee it all.

"What I really appreciate about Circles is the idea of coming alongside someone, rather than leading them or pushing them," she said in a mid-July interview. "In case management or therapy, there are set goals outlined. In Circles, you are encouraged to be an empowering factor behind someone who is the one taking the lead and setting their own goals to move out of poverty."

Circles of Hope connects volunteers (called allies) with individuals (circle leaders) who are ready and willing to make changes to move from limited resources to greater stability. In one of the "matched circles" that gather the second Tuesday of each month for supper and discussion in the church fellowship hall, circle leader Deanna Jack-

> What I really appreciate about Circles is the idea of coming alongside someone, rather than leading them or pushing them. —Jennifer Rose

Circles of Hope
HARVEY COUNTY

Circles of Hope staff, from left: Glenda Reynolds, Jennifer Rose, Wanda Pumphrey, Marva Weigelt and Danny Barrera. Photo by Laurie Oswald Robinson

> At Circles, I've learned to set and meet personal goals within a community.
> —Deanna Jackson

son has forged relationships with three allies, including Sheralyn Goering, a member of First Mennonite Church in Newton.

Two years ago, Jackson graduated from the Circle Leader Training class, after which she was matched with the allies for 18 months. Jackson and her allies have extended their relationship by several months to help Jackson solidify her gains. Those gains have included getting a bus driver job with the local school district. It includes health and retirement benefits, which she has never had. When she moved to Newton, she lived at a safe house for women suffering from domestic abuse.

"I was so tired of making the same decisions that led to the same unwanted outcomes, and I knew something needed to change," Jackson said during a mid-July interview. "I was tired of handouts and wanted to do it on my own. At Circles, I've learned to set and meet personal goals within a community. My allies provide emotional support as I do the hard work of moving toward greater financial stability."

Goering, during the same July interview, said: "Deanna and so many other circle leaders have shown incredible resilience. When things knock them down, they get back up. When they lose a job, they go get another one. If money is low, they find community resources. I've worked in the social work world, and I know that this level of resilience is special and courageous."

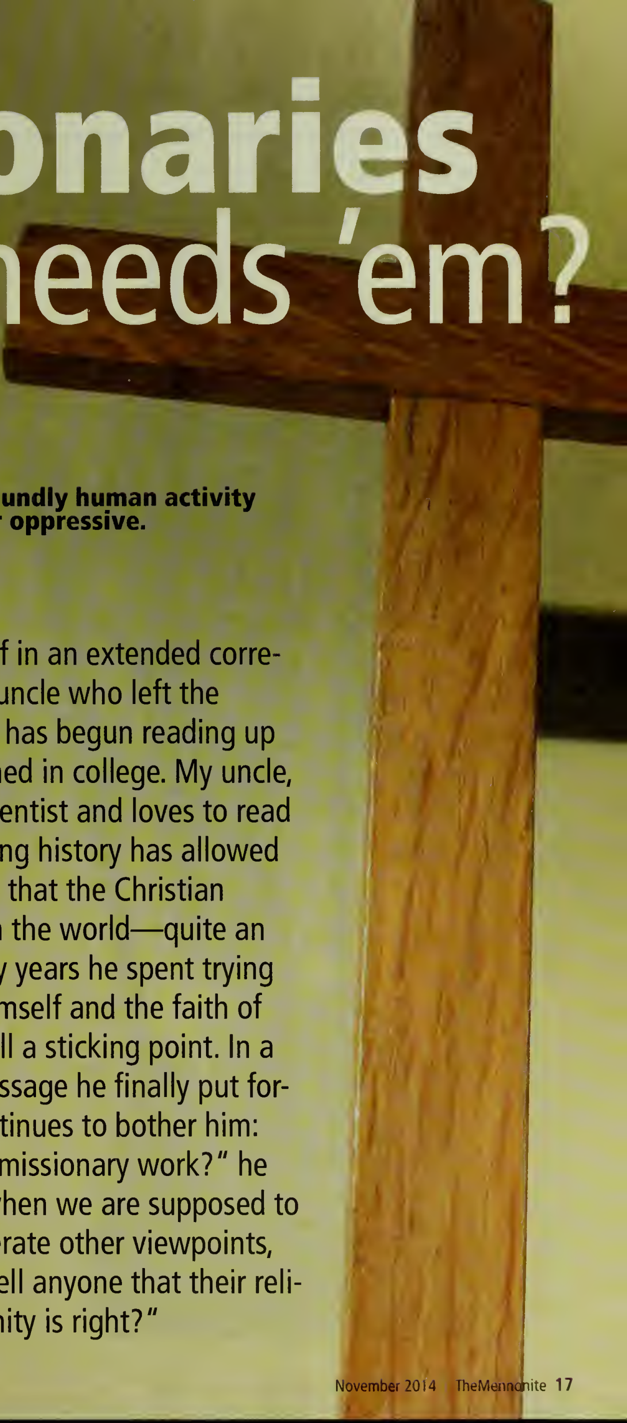
Equally resilient in support of those taking new steps into a more positive future is the Peace Connections-Circles staff that forms a team with Rose and other volunteers. They are Wanda Pumphrey, local Circles coach and a nationally certified coach who trains other Circle communities; Glenda Reynolds, local Circles coach; Marv Weigelt, communications director, and Danny Ba rera, full-time volunteer sponsored through Americorp VISTA (Volunteers in Service for America).

Pumphrey and Reynolds help circle leaders ar allies develop their relationships, recruit new cir cle leaders and allies and provide training for those roles. Even though gains take time, each tiny step forward is celebrated, encouraged and used to build momentum, they said in a mid-July interview.

"This is a long-term process, though our stati tics are trending in the right direction," Pumphre said. "Our circle leaders are gaining greater income and using public assistance less as well as increasing assets and decreasing bad debts. We look for small victories. That may mean a circle leader pays bills on a regular basis and that a circle leader doesn't walk off his job because he has learned to regulate his emotions better."

Reynolds, who worked for the Social Rehabilitation Services for 27 years, said: "People who came into SRS were so beaten down, and the onl thing I could do was approve benefits, which was handout. In Circles, we can offer them a hand up by helping people change their own lives."

Allies, staff and volunteers also grow and change, said Weigelt in a recent interview. "Bein part of a matched circle really took the wind out my sails in terms of being someone's 'savior,'" she said. "I have learned not to come into a relationship to change someone else but to be willin to be changed myself. As I hear the stories of my new friends, I realize our greatest gift is to inspir each other.—*Laurie Oswald Robinson*



Missionaries

Who needs ’em?

Why mission work is a profoundly human activity that need not be coercive or oppressive.

by Robert Brenneman

Not long ago I found myself in an extended correspondence with a beloved uncle who left the church many years ago but has begun reading up on the faith that he jettisoned in college. My uncle, who is an accomplished scientist and loves to read history, admitted that reading history has allowed him to appreciate the good that the Christian church has accomplished in the world—quite an admission, given how many years he spent trying to put distance between himself and the faith of his youth. But there was still a sticking point. In a frank and sincere email message he finally put forward the question that continues to bother him: “How do Christians justify missionary work?” he wrote. “In modern times, when we are supposed to respect each other and tolerate other viewpoints, what right do we have to tell anyone that their religion is wrong and Christianity is right?”

In a world that values individual freedom and personal quests for truth, what could possibly be more tone deaf and off-putting than these folks who "tell others how to believe"?

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It's easy to see the logic in my uncle's question, which is really more like a complaint. In fact, I suspect his question/complaint is widely shared by people outside the church and even some educated folks within the church. Who do these missionaries think they are, telling others what to believe? Wouldn't the church be better off withou missionaries?

Of course, it's not just missionaries that bother folks like my uncle. Evangelical Christianity (including the Anabaptist variety) comes under special scrutiny here. For these are the people supporting the missionaries—"enablers" we might call them—and, just as damning, evangelical Christians often act like missionaries in their own context, or at least they aspire to. If you wer brought up in an evangelical Christian context, you probably remember the song from Sunday school: "Beeeee a missionary every day. Telllll the world that Jesus is the way." In a world that values individual freedom and personal quests for truth, what could possibly be more tone deaf and off-putting than these folks who "tell others how to believe"?

My uncle's question pushed me to do some reflection of my own. Why do missionaries bug moderns so? Why do some Christians (and, I suspect, more than a few Mennonites) feel embarrassed about supporting mission boards and missionaries? The flagship Mennonite mission organization, Mennonite Mission Network, has see its contributions decline during the past decade. Are we becoming afraid or embarrassed of our missionaries?

There are at least two key complaints behind the typical criticism of missions and missionaries. First, as my uncle's question indicated, missionaries appear to violate a key doctrine of modernity—the sacred right of individual freedo of choice. If there were a slogan for our times (which some philosophers refer to as "late modernity" while others prefer to describe as "postmodernity") it may be something like, "Leave me alone to decide what's best for me." After all, wh could say no to the principle of free choice? Yet it's worth asking, When, if ever, does anyone actually decide *alone* what to believe, let alone how to live?

In truth, we are bombarded with messages regarding what we should think, read, buy or eat. The radio tells us which if any politicians we ought to listen to. The television informs us (in images more than words) which car to buy if we want to feel hip and mobile. (Especially popular these days are the messages about which medicines I should "talk to my doctor about" in order to feel young, happy, and alive.) Teachers tell children about their civic duty and how to pledge allegiance to the flag. And finally, professors tell us which research we should believe (or disbelieve) and how we can (and ought) to live an "examined life."

In short, messages about what to believe and how to live are everywhere, and it is naïve to think missionaries are the only folks trying to persuade others what's the best or most lasting investment of one's energy and attentions.

At their best, missionaries—both the "professional" and "lay" variety—recognize this fact and, amid the cacophony of contemporary persuaders, they simply invite others to turn away from the fleeting pleasures offered by a thousand manufactured false gods and "serve a different master" from that served by the many who drink at the fountains of nationalism, consumerism or intellectual elitism. "Try the Master from Nazareth," they say, then invite others to a community that, however imperfectly, models what serving this Master looks and feels like.

The other complaint behind much of the contemporary criticism of missionaries has to do with the history of mission work. "After all," goes this line of critique, "look at all the horrible things done by missionaries." We should not dismiss or disregard this criticism, for there are truly horrible stories of intentional and unintentional (though no less forgivable) acts of cultural imperialism committed by missionaries who underappreciated the basic dignity of the people and cultures where they worked. For example, in the Americas, cross and sword often went hand in hand in a colonial conquest that ultimately devastated both the indigenous inhabitants (supposedly being evangelized) and the African people brought along as "cheap labor." More recently, missionaries have provided information for unscrupulous embassy officers during dirty wars and have introduced technologies such as radios or PA systems that irrevocably changed the patterns of power and information-sharing in oral societies.

We should be unflinchingly critical of mission efforts that do not take seriously enough the profound dignity of humans, made in God's image, and of the cultures that grow out of these communities. The fact that political leaders as well as scientists (including the founders of the social sciences, such as anthropology and sociology) were often just as callous toward the colonized societies they "discovered" as were the missionaries, is no reason for missionaries to be anything less than rigorously self-critical in their encounters with other cultures. Still, it is hardly fair to paint "missionaries" with a brush that is broader than the brush used to describe other careers, such as lawyer, entrepreneur or statesman. There are plenty of stories of lawyers and entrepreneurs who abused their power in ways that had far-reaching consequences, but this is hardly reason enough to conclude that starting a business or studying law is itself suspect.

The church must repent of its transgressions, even when done in an effort to spread the gospel. But the appropriate response to such acts of cultural bigotry is not to close the mission boards, as some denominations did in the 1960s and '70s, but rather to seek to learn from the past, repent and find new ways to communicate Christ and his loving, empowering gospel that fully and concretely acknowledge the reality that God was not absent from the people or culture prior to the arrival of the missionaries. If we still believe that the message of Jesus and his gospel of suffering love is transformational and human, why on earth should Mennonites (or other Christians) simply sit on that message?

The right response to a criticism of past abuses or missteps by missionaries is not to ask whether to continue doing mission work at all but rather to seek new ways to do it well.

Put differently, the right response to a criticism of past abuses or missteps by missionaries is not to ask whether to continue doing mission work at all but rather to seek new ways to do it well. Missionaries (and anyone wishing to evangelize others) should ask themselves, Is the spirit and demeanor with which I am approaching those I seek to evangelize truly aligned with that of the suffering Jesus, the Lamb of God? Posture is everything. This is something Jesus understood well. When he sent out missionaries (12 in some cases, 72 in another) he provided precious little instruction about the content of the message they

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were to proclaim, saying only that they were sent "to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal." But he was emphatic and detailed in his insistence that the posture of their mission was to be one of vulnerability. "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic." In other words, leave the wallet, the credit cards and even the backpack at home. Don't even pack a sack lunch. This is the posture of a missionary who sets out without dragging behind them the empire and its political and economic system. It is the stance of a vulnerable human being with exciting news to share, not an empire to expand.

When I lived in Central America, I had the privilege of learning to know Mennonite missionaries who embodied such values of humility and transparency. Their approach was not one that rode on the protection, power or prestige of the empire. Rather, it was an approach that saw joy in learning from people in a place and culture formerly unfamiliar to them. Along the way they invited those around them to experience God in a new way, and in the process, both sides (missionary and mission field) were "evangelized"—which is to say, transformed by the gospel.

True, ethical mission work looks a lot like sincere people speaking sincerely and openly about beliefs and practices of ultimate meaning and inviting others to join them.

Perhaps there are places in the world today—Afghanistan and Iraq come to mind—where, due to the current political climate, a white North American missionary cannot help but "drag the empire" behind. About such places, we should be thoughtful and discerning. And, recognizing the times, North American Mennonites may be better off empowering for mission our brothers and sisters of the global South, whose nationality may allow them to more adequately present the suffering love of the vulnerable Jesus in these particular contexts. But it would be a shame and a dis-grace (in the literal sense of "withholding grace") to argue on the basis of such unique contexts that missionary work itself is outmoded or immoral.

Shortly after our family moved to a new community in northern Vermont, a friend and co-worker of my wife, Gaby, invited her to attend worship at this friend's church, which happened t be a large Unitarian Universalist congregation in our town of Burlington, Vt. This friend knew that Gaby is Mennonite and was sure she was missing out by not attending a UU church (since there is no Mennonite church in the area). Her friend argued passionately and at length that Gaby—and our whole family—ought to consider attending First Unitarian.

After discussing the matter, Gaby and I decided that a Unitarian church was probably not what we were looking for. We even chuckled at the irony o being "evangelized" by a Unitarian. But the fact is that Gaby's friend made her feel welcome by her act of vulnerability in inviting our family to something that is so clearly important to her. Far from making Gaby feel targeted or coerced into doing something she didn't want to do, by inviting us to her church, this friend signaled to Gaby that she was valued—that there were people in the community who liked her and wanted her to be a part of a community that was important to them. Such gestures of hospitality and friendship are at the heart of good mission work.

Far from being a wholly unique or hopelessly outmoded affair, true, ethical mission work looks lot like sincere people speaking sincerely and openly about beliefs and practices of ultimate meaning and inviting others to join them in revering a loving God who transforms them continually toward being the vulnerable and beautiful creatures they were created to be. As such, missionary work, far from being an act of coercion or oppression, is a profoundly human activity. Who needs missionaries? The church needs them, and so does the world.

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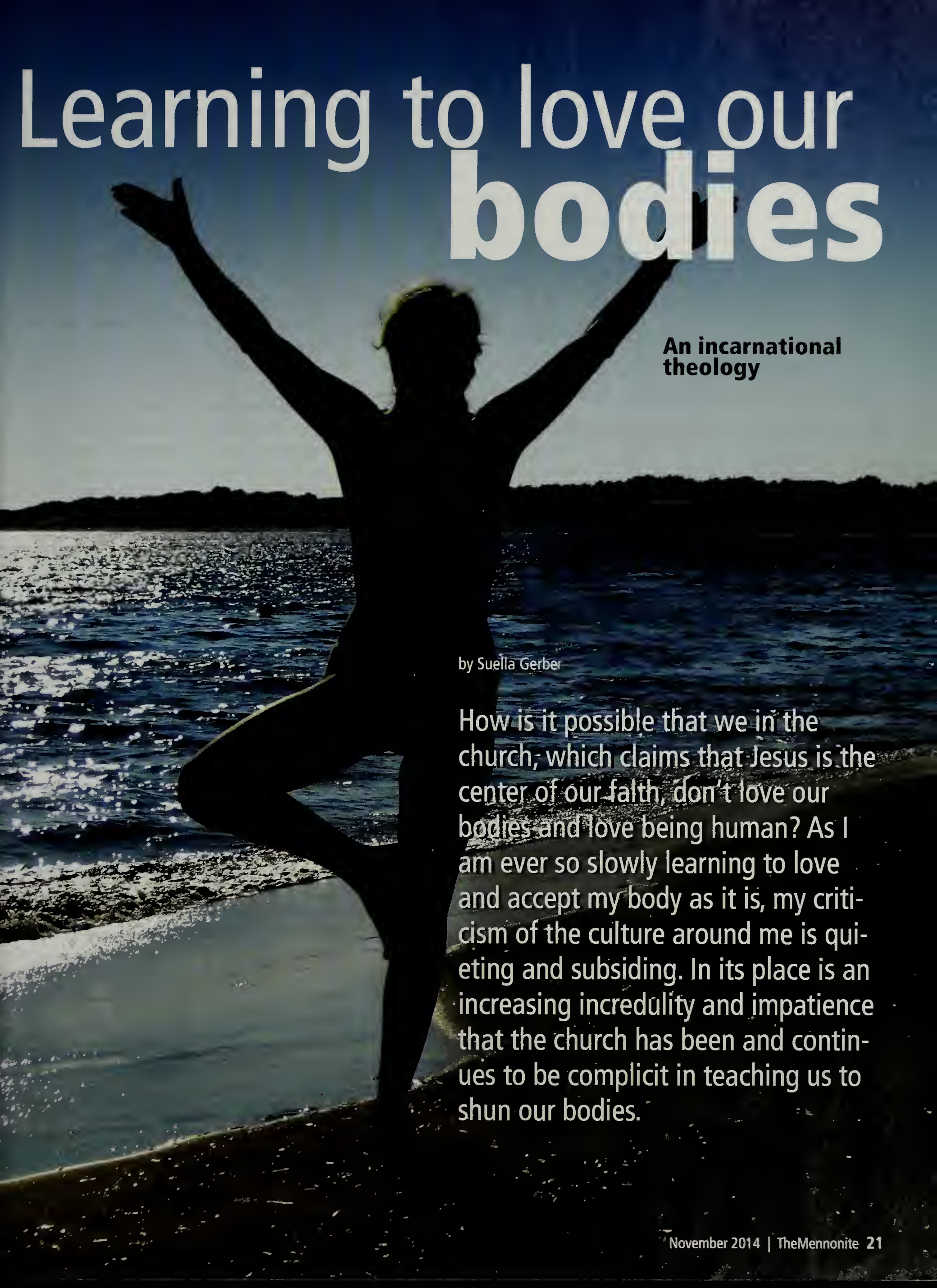


Learning to love our bodies

An incarnational theology

by Suella Gerber

How is it possible that we in the church, which claims that Jesus is the center of our faith, don't love our bodies and love being human? As I am ever so slowly learning to love and accept my body as it is, my criticism of the culture around me is quieting and subsiding. In its place is an increasing incredulity and impatience that the church has been and continues to be complicit in teaching us to shun our bodies.

It is an understatement to say that most girls and women in this country struggle to love their bodies. From magazines to movies to shopping malls, the pervasive message is that our bodies need to be slimmed down here, enhanced there, dressed this way, made up that way, shaved and waxed and peeled and colored and highlighted and painted and on and on. Blaming the world around us for the ever more sophisticated objectification of women's bodies comes naturally, and there is responsibility and fault there.

Too often the theology we live is one that disembodies our minds and spirits.

The Christian faith claims that Jesus is the Son of God. We know this so well that we no longer have any idea what it means or what a profound and remarkable thing it is. We call this belief the Incarnation: Jesus is God in the flesh. We don't hold this as an idea or a spiritualized belief; rather our faith says God was born in the historical person of Jesus. A God who chooses to become a human being is one who loves being with humans.

Perhaps one of the most pervasive and insidious influences through the centuries has been Platonism. Platonic thought elevates the ideal over the real, the spiritual over the physical, mind over matter. Not only is the soul elevated but the body is denigrated, shamed for its baseness. Too often the theology we live is one that disembodies our minds and spirits. What we teach about heaven and hell confirms that spirit and minds will go to heaven, but bodies will burn in hell.

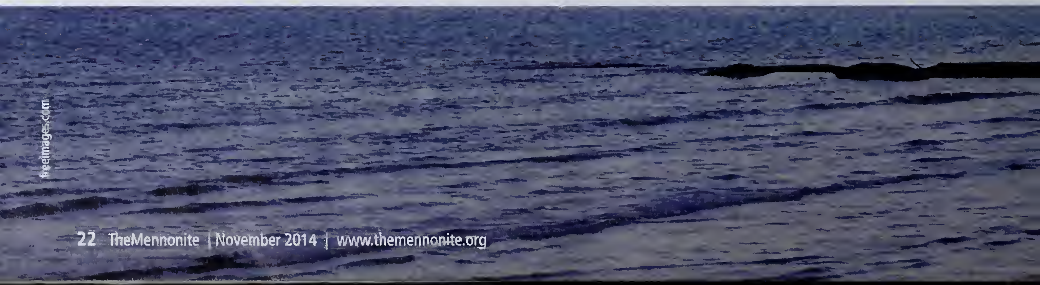
The church has fostered an oppositional relationship between earth and heaven. This separation between heaven and earth, between flesh and spirit, denies the Incarnation. The church says Jesus was fully divine and fully human, and that is the theology we teach. But the belief we actually live is that Jesus was fully divine but a special and different kind of human being. Yet Jesus referred to his disciples as brothers, siblings, and he taugh us to pray, "Our Father." Just as Jesus' body gave flesh to Creating God, so God is waiting to be enfleshed in our bodies.

Loving our bodies is not some new age or heretical concept; it is at the heart of the gospel. Learning to love our bodies is the first step to learning to love all bodies, but that is no small task. It means bringing a new awareness and a revision to the theologies of the church. If we are going to learn to love our bodies, we need a practice that teaches us to love and honor bodies.

One way to do this is through the ancient practice of yoga. We may not think of yoga as a way to practice Christian theology. In fact, friends who are yoga teachers often talk about concerns they hear from people in classes that yoga violates their Christian beliefs. There is an irony tha our church, with the foundational doctrine of the Incarnation, doesn't have a practice for us to lear to inhabit and love our bodies, so it makes sense that we borrow from another culture and translat it into a Christian practice.

Yoga is a practice of mindfulness, of learning to be in the body, in space and in time. As such, it easily becomes an incarnational practice. The intention of embodied prayer brought to yoga make it an appropriate way to practice learning to love bodies. It also matters who the teacher is—just a teachers and pastors in the church matter. My teacher welcomes every body—any shape and size, any level of ability and flexibility. On the yoga mat, wherever and however we are in our practice, is the perfect place to be. Each yoga pose is distinctly and uniquely expressed in individual bodies. While every pose is celebrated, there is no measure of perfection or completion; there is only the invitation to give myself to greater opening, deeper stretching, more strengt and sturdier balance.

Let me give several examples of how the prac-



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tice of yoga becomes an incarnational practice. Let's take Jesus' teaching to love our enemies. Most of us give intellectual assent to this teaching, but it is not easy. The truth is that it's hard, very hard, to love our enemies. As pacifists (and "nice" Mennonites) we may not identify people in our lives as enemies, but if we tell the truth, we do have enemies. Jesus' words, "love your enemies," make it sound like a simple task. But the emotions and behaviors our enemies evoke in us are anything but simple; they catch us off guard and demand attention.

Through yoga I've learned to bring my practice on the mat to my life off the mat. When I find myself in a difficult situation, in the eye of an emotional storm contemplating some form of violence against another body, I remember my yoga pose and breathe, and my body remembers the experience of love. Now as I face this "other" body, my practiced body whispers that my enemy is also a beloved body. My body remembers its prayer and, rather than acting out of anger, over time and with hours of practice, learns to act out of love.

Yoga has been an essential practice as I learn to let the profundity, the forgiving-ness and the immanence of God's love form and transform me—body and spirit. There is a yoga pose (half-moon) that has taken me years to be able to do. Slowly, one practice at a time, after a year or so, I noticed I could balance. After more years, trusting my body's learnings, I am now able to lean into my balance and strength, opening my body in new ways, experiencing the power and vulnerability of such an opening. This happened so gradually that I barely noticed. Learning to live as God's beloved happens slowly.

And so, over time, we discover that our bodies are fully capable of giving flesh to God, just as Jesus' body gave flesh to the Holy One. In our humanity, we give residence to God, on earth as in heaven, just as Jesus did. We discover that we, too, can do impossible things, such as loving our enemies.

There are many ways we can practice embracing and loving our bodies. But they all require that we move from our heads, from our thoughts and our thinking, into the physicality of our bodies. And so I imagine the following:

- A church where our catechism includes an incarnational theology that teaches us that God already loves us, teaches us to love being human and teaches us to love human beings the way God loves human beings. When we give Bibles to our children, we will give a yoga mat as well.
- A church where each time we gather for worship, we breathe together, recognizing that it is the breath of God that gives each of us our being and that together we are the body of Christ.
- A church where, rather than being divided by ways of thinking and understanding, we gather to cook meals and sit our bodies down, side by side, to eat. Instead of being separated by beliefs, we play together. We share our stories with each other, telling each other about the pain and joy that our bodies carry.
- And I imagine a church where, when we are gathered for Communion and we hear the words, "This is my body," we remember the way Jesus taught us to love bodies, all bodies, even our own.

Over time, we discover that our bodies are fully capable of giving flesh to God, just as Jesus' body gave flesh to the Holy One.

Suella Gerber is pastor at Fellowship of Hope in Elkhart, Ind.

Shalom for the **children** of **Ethiopia**

Developing curriculum for the church in Ethiopia provides lessons for teaching Sunday school in the United States.

A sunday school teacher with a child. Photo by Krista Allen

by Krista Allen

In August 2008, I set foot in Ethiopia for the first time as one of four SALTers (Mennonite Central Committee's yearlong Service and Learning Together program for young adults). I only expected to stay for one year as a communications officer in Nazret, the second largest city in Ethiopia. But as my SALT year ended, MCC asked me to stay on and start a new position as a children's peace curriculum developer for the Meserete Kristos Church (MKC).

MKC, the largest single denomination of Mennonites in the world and part of Mennonite World Conference (MWC), had an active peace and reconciliation program for adults in the church. They also knew that for peace to truly take root, it must start with the children. MKC asked MCC to provide a person to write the curriculum, and MCC asked me to do this.

Ethiopia is made up of many diverse cultures and languages, which presented a challenge throughout the process but also showed that God's love and shalom can transcend culture.

I spent the first year researching. I interviewed 131 people, including church leaders, children's ministry workers, parents and children from six regions of Ethiopia. I asked about cultural perceptions ranging from peace to children to methods of conflict resolution. I researched existing curricula and teaching practices. I worked closely with my colleagues in the MKC peace office and executive leadership. I presented my findings to MKC's leadership and, based on their feedback, created an outline for the curriculum. The research showed the need for a uniform children's curriculum that would teach a holistic concept of peace.

"Shalom," a Hebrew word that in the Bible refers to being in right relationship with God, self, others and the whole created world, became the foundational concept for the curriculum. Shalom is peace that encompasses the body, mind and soul. With shalom as the foundation, the curriculum was divided into four quarters, each with 13 weeks of lessons.

The lessons built on one another, beginning with a good relationship with God. This lays a foundation for a good relationship with self, and a good relationship with self lays a foundation for a good relationship with others. Each relationship builds until we learn to relate rightly with all creation. The four categories are right relationship with God, self, family and friends and the whole created world. The curriculum consists of 52 lessons and is designed for three age groups (3-6, 7-9 and 10- to 12-year-olds), bringing the total number of lessons written to 156. The idea was that all age groups learn at an age appropriate level with the same topic on the same day.

Designing and writing these lessons and the three adult training manuals took two years. The adult manuals explore raising children with shalom, teaching children and how they can experience God, the role of the church and how to create and teach a holistic children's ministry. The lessons, designed to teach holistically, include a variety of stories, Scripture passages, physical activities, opportunities for creativity and different kinds of questions.

While the formal content is essential, the informal concepts taught through actions reinforce and cement the concepts. Topics include reading the Bible, prayer, physical care, humility, self-forgiveness, conflict resolution, forgiving others, service, creation care, loving those who are different and many more. Scripture and prayer laid the foundation for the curriculum. Each lesson consists of a Scripture passage, teacher's meditation and prayer, opening activity, time for singing, opening questions, some form of story or Scripture exploration, review questions, weekly challenges, memory verse, game and craft.

The research showed the need for a uniform children's curriculum that would teach a holistic concept of peace.

The writing process did not occur in a vacuum. The help of family and friends in Ethiopia and the United States were essential. From bouncing off ideas to receiving cultural guidance to help creating crafts and games, others played an important role in the curriculum's development.

In 2012, my MCC term was coming to a close. The curriculum was moving through the final stages of writing, and it was time to begin to envision its implementation. Before it could be implemented, the 1,000-plus pages needed to be reviewed for cultural and theological accuracy and then undergo translation from English into Amharic, one of the main languages in Ethiopia. My part was almost finished with the exception of the training of trainers. Yet, the review and translation process would take time. It was time for me to leave a land and people I had come to care deeply for and to return to the United States. In October 2012, I boarded a plane expecting to return in 3-6 months to train on the curriculum.

One lesson I learned while in Ethiopia is that things rarely go as planned. Time passed, and things did not move at the pace we had anticipated. In June, I received an email saying the review and translation process was complete and asking if I could return for the training. Just over ▶

Participants learn how to use the new curriculum for the Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia.

Photo by Krista Allen

two months after that email, I stepped off the plane back in Ethiopia and felt as if only a few weeks had passed—not two years—since I left.

I was ready to help put five years' worth of work into motion, and I had less than two weeks to do it. The first week was a whirlwind of preparation and reconnecting. It was a time to reacquaint myself with the culture, the language and the curriculum, and to gather supplies and complete edits.

The second week took me out of the capital city of Addis Ababa, where I had worked and lived during the curriculum's development, to the town of Debre Zeit. The training took place at a training center outside the city, where distractions could be kept to a minimum and I could focus on the training.

> The gift of storytelling I learned from my Ethiopian colleagues is one I hope to share with my students.

Thirty-two participants from five different regions of Ethiopia attended. The participants consisted of the regional MKC coordinators and a selection of Sunday school teachers and children's ministers. The teachers seemed engaged and eager to learn the new curriculum. They brought a wealth of experience and knowledge to the training. They said they were excited to have a uniform curriculum available for the first time for the whole Mennonite Church of Ethiopia. This would be the first curriculum to enable all the churches to learn the same thing at the same time and to do so in a holistic manner.

During the training, participants had an opportunity both to teach lessons and participate as learners of the lessons. They practiced telling the stories and doing the activities found in the curriculum. We covered different topics, such as how to design a holistic children's ministry and Sunday school curriculum, teacher selection and retention, how to prepare a lesson and how to teach a lesson holistically. Group work and open discussion were essential parts of the training. We spen significant time working on creating goals, objectives and activities for a children's ministry and a specific lesson.

The teachers were excellent storytellers and respected teachers. The training taught intentionality and reinforcing lessons in a holistic manner, using a variety of senses and techniques building on the skills the teachers brought to the training.

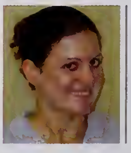
During a reflection time, participants expressed appreciation for the training, with more than one saying how a uniform curriculum had been long awaited, and they were excited to finally have one contextualized to Ethiopia for use in MKC.

Mekonnen Desalygn, MCC program manager for Ethiopia, not only translated the material but taught concepts, putting them into the cultural context. Others were instrumental in the training the participants taught one another and helped bring the concepts to life in their own contexts.

Leaders hope the curriculum will lay a foundation for transformational peace in Ethiopia. With God's help, it will enable children as well as parents and teachers to learn valuable lessons not only through story but through hands-on experience that will provide academic, spiritual, physica and emotional development. Through prayer, perseverance, committed teachers and, most importantly, God's provision, the curriculum has the potential to transform lives.

Now that I have returned to the States, I am struck by the wisdom and passion of the church in Ethiopia. I returned to the Sunday school classroom at Waterford Mennonite Church, my home congregation. The gift of storytelling I learned from my Ethiopian colleagues is one I hope to share with my students. While each of us brings our unique culture, the love of God transcends, and the lessons taught to the children in Ethiopia are the lessons children here need to learn.

I pray that the curriculum will raise up Christ followers who will share Christ's shalom with their families, communities, country and the world. I pray for children everywhere.



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Exploring the **frontiers** of **faith**

A Mennonite reflects on a visit to Catholic Spain and Muslim Morocco.

by Kara Lofton

The act was small—20 college students carrying bricks and stones 100 meters to a building site—but nobody failed to grasp its significance. The students were from Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., and the bricks were needed for building a mosque in rural Morocco.

This strangely invigorating but backbreaking labor marked my last week of a study abroad semester in previously Moorish (now nominally Catholic) Spain and thoroughly Muslim Morocco. I came to these countries with fairly orthodox Christian beliefs; I left them feeling uncertain of what I believe.

During our travels through Spain and Morocco, we students were forced to grapple with ideas and experiences that were new, often uncomfortable and occasionally painful. The juxtaposition of Anabaptism with Catholicism and Islam challenged our beliefs, made us ask, What is true? Could I be wrong? and, If there are faithful adherents to all three faiths who truly believe they are worshiping God the way God wants to be worshiped, who is wrong? Or is everyone right?

Appropriately, the theme for our cross-cultural semester was "Convivencia," a Spanish term that translates approximately to "coming together" and is associated with religious tolerance.

Disturbed by religious practices in Spain

The Mennonite congregation in Barcelona is one of only six in all of Spain, encompassing perhaps 300 individuals. We visited the church briefly while en route to Granada to start our studies.

Kara Lofton (right) with Ikram, her Arabic teacher in Morocco. Photo provided

About eight of the 43 members, including the pastor, greeted us. They were thrilled to have us and happily gave us a tour around the network of buildings they used for housing individuals and families who had been evicted from their homes due to Spain's recession-driven housing crisis. Their sanctuary was tiny, bare and filled with folding chairs they moved out into a courtyard so they could accommodate all of us in a bigger space.

They obviously spent most of their money on outreach programs and on helping those who had been hit hardest by the Spanish economic crisis to get back on their feet. Visiting this congregation was a fascinating look at resource distribution, while the day before we visited the Sagrada Familia, an ornate basilica that has been under construction since 1882, supported by an annual budget of 18 million Euros.

While in Spain, we visited other famous cathedrals and churches including the Cathedral of Granada, which boasts a sculpture of St. James,

During our travels through Spain and Morocco, we students were forced to grapple with ideas and experiences that were new, often uncomfortable and occasionally painful.

Student James Helmuth (left) plays soccer in Morocco with Mohamed Karmoun, a boy from the village and Kara. Photo provided

"The Moor Killer," crushing a Muslim Moor under the feet of his horse; the Cathedral of Sevilla; the Cathedral of Cordoba, which used to be a mosque; and the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, which was built specifically to honor St. James and his alleged role in a victory against the armies of the Moors in 844.

Over a couple of months, I grew critical of an interpretation of Christianity that allowed expensive religious buildings to exist while beggars—who largely appeared to be normal, mature adults down on their luck—sat outside, hoping that patrons would be filled with enough religious guilt to give them money to feed their children. The cathedrals we visited were entirely different from the simple Mennonite church of Barcelona.

We gawked at the frequent, religious-themed parades, heavily populated by elderly women and giant plastic statues of saints. On a special day for the Virgin Mary, a classmate saw police sweep through the streets beforehand, shunting away homeless folks so their presence would not disturb the parade. We balked at the irony of removing the poor to make way for a procession in honor of Jesus Christ, a champion of the poor.

> We balked at the irony of removing the poor to make way for a procession in honor of Jesus Christ, a champion of the poor.

Catholicism in today's Spain seems to be a religion of the elderly. The young people I met at the University of Granada seemed much more concerned with the current economic situation than with Catholic piety. After learning in a University of Granada class about the Roman Catholic Church's long history of oppression, intolerance, violence, opulence and corruption, the cynic in me would not be sorry if this form of Catholicism died with the older generation. I wonder how many in the younger generation, though, might find their way back to their grandmother's church as they continue to hear Pope Francis say things that belie the excesses of his faith tradition, such as:

- "The world has become an idolater of this god called money."
- "To defend this economic culture, a throwaway culture has been installed. We throw away grandparents, and we throw away young people. We have to say no to his throwaway culture. We want a just system that helps everyone."

Pilgrimage on the Camino de Santiago

Considering my questions about the Catholic tradition, it is perhaps strange that I chose to spend my 10 days of mid-semester break hiking 223 kilometers of a famous Catholic pilgrimage, the Camino de Santiago. Yet God's presence has always felt stronger to me in the cathedrals of nature than in a manmade building decorated with gilded altars and marble colonnades.

Unlike humanity, nature is simple. It is the creation of a creator God. It does not dispute doctrin or theology, and it does not kill itself because of ideological differences. Adherents to all three monotheistic religions undergo pilgrimages of various lengths as a way to show devotion to God seek answers or healing, and cleanse themselves of transgressions. I wanted answers.

My time on the Camino was perhaps the most important week of the entire trip because I had nothing on my agenda each day except to get up and walk. While walking, day after day, hour after hour, the mind begins to open, and one realizes that perhaps it is not the answers to questions that are important but the ongoing journey to seek those answers.

I settled into pondering the correlation betwee coming to peace with oneself and coming to peac with the world around oneself. The more tolerant and accepting of my own faults and shortcomings I became on the trip, the more easily I was able t forgive the faults of others. Surely this correlatio extends beyond me? What if religious intolerance and religious fundamentalism exists because people are afraid of seeking truth for themselves and living with any resultant ambiguity?

Welcomed by Moroccan Muslims

I knew next to nothing about the Islamic religion before going to Morocco, which seemed like a serious deficit in my education, since a large portion of the world's population is Muslim. I came to appreciate that, at its center, Islam is a religion of tolerance and moderation. (My information about Islam is taken from my Islamic studies class in Morocco, the book *No God, but God* by Reza Aslan and *Jesus and Muhammad: The Parallel Sayings*, edited by Joey Green.)

Adherents are taught that there is no God but Allah, to pray five times a day so that their lives may be in constant communication with the divine, to fast during the month of Ramadan as a spiritual discipline and as a means of drawing closer to God, to give 2.5 percent of their income to the poor and needy and to perform the Haj—the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca—once in a lifetime if they are able to do so.

In Morocco, where most meals are eaten from a group platter, we learned to only use three fingers in order to encourage moderation and to make sure that everyone got their fair share. We were taught that Muslims view Christians and Jews as "People of the Book" who have also received divine revelation from God.

We learned that Muslims believe that they should avoid war if at all possible but that they are allowed to defend themselves when attacked. Actually, peace is a highly valued principle in Islam, and Muslims are encouraged to live harmoniously with both one another and those of different faiths.

Prone to being a tough questioner, I asked our Moroccan professor of Islam, Dris, how it was possible that Islam is a religion of moderation when both American and British newspapers report Islamic organizations such as the Taliban and Al-Qaeda as being militant, extremely oppressive toward women and as enforcers of "laws" that they attribute to their religion, such as banning girls' education. Dris seemed almost offended that I had compared the Islam he follows to the Islam of the Taliban and said clearly, "That is not Islam. The Taliban are Pashtun," referring to people who speak the Pashto language and primarily live in Afghanistan and northwest Pakistan. "The Islam they follow has been corrupted by tribal beliefs. They are using Islam to impose practices that have no scriptural basis and are simply false."

His vehement rejection of extremist versions of Islam made sense to me because it is similar to the reaction I have when I read about fundamentalist Christian organizations such as Westboro Baptist Church or Liberty University, which, like the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, are often featured in the news preaching a gospel of condemnation rather than love.

The more I learned about Islam and the more Muslims I met, the more I believed that although Islam and Christianity are indeed different religions, they have more in common than the media lead one to believe. "Make peace between your brethren and fear God so you will obtain mercy" (Quran 49:10). "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12). "None of you has faith unless he loves for his brother what he loves for himself" (Hadith of Bukhari 2:6). I could go on, for there are many passages between Christian and Muslim scriptures that are so similar it is hard to tell from which book they come.

Both Muslims and Christians believe in care for the poor, widowed and needy, in peace and love for one's neighbors as oneself, in the sanctity of family and in the existence of one Higher Power.

What if Christians and Muslims stopped fighting one another long enough to realize that although there are differences, there are also a lot of beliefs that they hold in common?

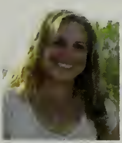
Both Muslims and Christians believe in care for the poor, widowed and needy, in peace and love for one's neighbors as oneself.

Appreciating La Convivencia

In Spanish, the word "convivencia" means coexistence. Specifically, the word has come to refer to a 400-year period ending in 1492 of religious tolerance, when Spain's Muslim rulers allowed Christians and Jews to continue their own religious practices. This resulted in an era of relative peace for all three Abrahamic religions. During the Christian "reconquista" and following the Spanish inquisition—during which Isabel and Ferdinand demanded that Muslims and Jews either convert to Christianity or leave the country—religious tolerance became a thing of the past.

Painting a wall in Morocco. Photo provided

I find it hopeful that La Convivencia is part of Spanish and Moroccan history. The fact that La Convivencia occurred at all means that it can occur again in our future. It means that 20 Mennonite college students carrying bricks for a Moroccan mosque may not be an anomaly, but rather the resurrection of something much greater—religious tolerance, dialogue and understanding.



Kara Lofton graduates from Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, Va., next month. She's a member of Community Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa.

This piece was a submission in the 2013-14 Bethany Seminary essay contest.

The entire Bible speaks of God's mission

Stanley Green is executive director of Mennonite Mission Network.

In September, during Sunday school, someone asked me, "Why do we still do mission at all?" Ordinarily, I would be unsettled by such a question. Is not the case for mission self-evident, after all? I'm understanding, however, that perhaps that's not true for many.

Why do we do mission? I answered with the words of Leonardo Boff in his book *Ecclesiogenesis* (1997): "God has a project." That project, Boff observes, is being carried out in the course of human history. Furthermore, he says, God's project is advanced by human agency. Ordinary people, however weak or flawed, are the instruments the Spirit uses to advance God's purposes.

In an earlier life, I was satisfied with proof texts I understood and underscored the importance of mission. Weren't Jesus' last sayings a directive to be involved in the mission of announcing and inviting people into God's reign?

More and more, however, I have become aware that respected biblical scholars are increasingly uncomfortable with the prooftexting method. This and approaching the Bible merely as a tool for devotions or spiritual formation is seen as an unwarranted, instrumentalist use of the Bible for predetermined ends. Instead, these scholars point to the whole Bible as the comprehensive though varied story of God reaching into human history to effect the restoration of the created order to its originally intended purpose and the reconciliation of God and the human family.

Convinced that this approach of imagining our place in God's project within the entire narrative of Scripture has great merit, I discovered various witnesses who respond to the question about the continuing validity of mission through fresh recourse to the biblical text in its entirety.

The first witness comes to us through the voice of the renowned New Testament scholar Christopher Wright in his book *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (2006). His approach shows that the entire Bible is generated by and is all about God's mission. The Bible, Wright contends, does not just contain texts that happen to provide a convincing rationale for the missionary endeavor of the church but is itself a "missional" phenomenon. Wright insists that the entire text must be from the perspective of God's unfolding purpose in the life and ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The second witness, James V. Brownson, in his book *Speaking the Truth in Love: New Testament Resources for a Missional Hermeneutic* (1998), adopts an approach that proceeds from an understanding of God's missional purposes in the world. It builds on a basic observation about the New Testament: The early Christian movement that produced and canonized the New Testament was a movement with a specifically missionary character. Furthermore, he finds strong support for his approach in the cross-cultural dynamics of the early church's missional encounters seen in its crossing cultural boundaries. Everywhere the church bears witness to and participates in God's gracious activity in the world.

The third witness, Richard Bauckham in his book *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in A Postmodern World* (2003), calls attention to the movement in the text from the particular to the universal. Where Wright focuses on the cosmic scope of the purposes of God, Bauckham understands that at the heart of the biblical narrative is a focus on God's redemptive purposes on behalf of the human family. Foundational to these purposes is God's identification with particular individuals or people in human history for the sake of becoming known by all.

The final witness, Francis Dubose in his book *The God Who Sends* (1983), upholds the idea of God's apostolic purpose as indispensable and fundamental to understanding the Bible. Dubose provides copious biblical evidence to support his thesis that God's self-revelation is that of a God who sends. Mission means sending. The climactic expression is sending Jesus into the world for the redemption of humanity. The church is created out of this missional purpose and is sent to witness to God's redemptive concern for all people everywhere in the face of issues that affect their daily lives.

All four of these witnesses confirm that the God of the Old and New Testaments is a purposive God. Together they make the claim that the Bible is the comprehensive though varied story of God reaching into human history to effect the restoration of the created order to its originally intended purpose and the reconciliation of God and the human family. The essence of the Christian church is constituted by God's mission, for which it is formed and for which it exists. TM

The church is created out of this missional purpose and is sent to witness to God's redemptive concern for all people everywhere in the face of issues that affect their daily lives.

Don't repeat what has not worked

For many Americans, President Obama, with his latest plan to expand U.S. military intervention in Iraq, is finally "doing something." And people here in Iraqi Kurdistan are generally hopeful that this will stop the militant fighters calling themselves "the Islamic State," or ISIS. I keenly feel the pain of the people here and do not want any more people brutalized, but Obama's plan will not diminish global terrorism; it will only expand and strengthen it.

It is helpful to remember that ISIS's ability to capture areas of Iraq was possible because the United States had destroyed its society and supported the Shia government that excluded Sunni populations, subjecting them to widespread loss of jobs, attacks, mass arrests, torture and extrajudicial killings.

While our team lived and worked in Baghdad, the U.S. and Iraqi forces bombed and destroyed whole neighborhoods and cities in the name of antiterrorism, generating more anger toward America. The United States failed to support the progressive, mostly nonviolent uprisings around the country against government abuse and corruption. Throughout the years of occupation, it was clear to us that U.S. military actions in Iraq were not directed at protecting the Iraqi people but for protecting American personnel and U.S. economic and military interests in Iraq and the Middle East. In early August, U.S. military strikes were, once again, less for protecting religious and ethnic minorities in Iraq than protecting U.S. diplomats and the large oil companies developing oil fields in the Kurdish region.

Obama used Somalia and Yemen as examples of successful collaboration against terrorism, but they point to the failure of our counter-terrorism strategy. Bombing, drone strikes and covert actions by Special Forces in Somalia have not diminished al Shabaab or al-Qaeda in Yemen but helped their recruitment.

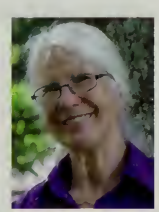
Much of the power of ISIS is in its ability to generate horrific fear. The beheadings seem to be staged to provoke the United States and its allies to a military response and to behave as jihadist groups have made out the West to be—monsters bent on global domination, exploiting and oppressing Muslims. Perpetuating this image maintains the jihadist groups' support among the local populations and brings in new recruits.

Each time the United States puts forth an alarmist scenario and tells us there is no other way but military action to stop an evil force, intelligent people—who know our wars have been robbing our society of money for human needs and giving it to corporations—are again seduced by fear. They are not provided with a fair debate on the political and social alternatives to a constant war for maintaining military and economic dominance around the world.

What are some strong nonmilitary measures the United States can take to weaken ISIS in Iraq and Syria and start reversing the spread of the global terrorist movement?

- Stop the airstrikes, since they serve to strengthen the extremist movements.
- Deal with the underlying problems that fuel extremism and global terrorism. Support governments in providing their people with better living conditions and fair distribution of their resources. Support local nonviolent movements for change.
- Develop political solutions. In Iraq, put pressure on the Iraqi government to reverse years of anti-Sunni sectarianism. In Syria, push the UN to restart negotiations to end the civil war, bringing to the table nonviolent activists, women, refugees, armed rebels, and regional and global players.
- Develop a coalition of countries working on political and diplomatic, nonmilitary actions to weaken ISIS. Use financial pressures and stop the flow of money and weapons into the region. Broaden the talks with Iran to develop a new partnership on these issues.
- Collaborate with Kurdish rebel groups already protecting minority groups from ISIS in northern Iraq and take them off the terrorist list. Reduce tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia.
- Reverse decades-long policies and actions of the U.S. government around the world for domination and exploitation. Recreate world monetary systems such as the World Bank and IMF to be nonexploitive. Allow the UN to represent the global community and address injustice. Change U.S. policies with Israel.
- Address the humanitarian crisis the United States helped create. Give nonmilitary aid.

There are no quick-fix solutions, but we will not reduce the suffering from war and build peaceful and stable societies if we keep repeating the strategies that have only fueled strife. TM



Peggy Faw Gish works with Christian Peacemaker Teams in Iraqi Kurdistan and is author of *Walking Through Fire: Iraqis' Struggle for Justice and Reconciliation* (Cascade Books, 2013).

We will not reduce the suffering from war and build peaceful and stable societies if we keep repeating the strategies that have only fueled strife.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

David Boshart nominee for moderator-elect

Delegate Assembly will vote on nomination in July 2015 in Kansas City, Mo.

The Leadership Discernment Committee of Mennonite Church USA announces David Boshart of Wellman, Iowa, as the nominee for moderator-elect of Mennonite Church USA for the 2015-2017 biennium.

The denominational Delegate Assembly will vote on the nomination in July 2015 during the biennial convention in Kansas City, Mo.

Boshart serves as executive conference minister for Central Plains Mennonite Conference and is in his seventh year of service on Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board.

"David's experience in leading the church at the local level, the area conference level and the national level make him uniquely positioned for this role," says Terry Shue, Mennonite Church USA director for leadership development and the staff member assigned to work with the Leadership Discernment Committee.

If affirmed at the Kansas City 2015 assembly, Boshart will serve two years as moderator-elect and two years as moderator and chair of the Executive Board.

He would succeed the current moderator-elect, Patricia Shelly of North Newton, Kan. The current moderator is Elizabeth Soto Albrecht of Lancaster, Pa.

Prior to being appointed as executive conference minister in 2010, Boshart served as a pastor of local congregations for more than 25 years.

He has a Ph.D. in leadership studies with an emphasis in missional theology from Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Mich., and is the author of *Becoming Missional: Denominations and New Church Development in Complex Social Contexts* and *Sex and Faith*, a Bible study guide on male sexuality from the Closer than a Brother series published by Faith and Life Press.

Boshart also serves as an adjunct professor at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., and Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, Va.

In his current role, Boshart provides leadership for the overall mission, vision and direction of Central Plains Mennonite Conference.

He works with local congregations to help them focus their vision for ministry in their local contexts, and also to help develop partnerships among congregations to expand their capacity for witness and mission.

Boshart has accepted this nomination with the unanimou support and affirmation of the Executive Committee of Central Plains Mennonite Conference.

During its Sept. 25–27 meetings in Kansas City, Mo., Mennonite Church USA's Executive Board members unanimously affirmed Boshart's nomination, and this support was echoed by members of the Constituency Leaders Council at its Oct. 6–8 meeting in Schiller Park, Ill.

Boshart is married to Shana Peachey Boshart, who serve as Central Plains' conference minister for Christian formation, and they have three sons. They are part of Wellman Mennonite Church.

The Leadership Discernment Committee consists of Horace McMillon (chair), Jackson, Miss.; Dionicio Acosta, Lititz, Pa.; Kim Vu Friesen, Minneapolis, Minn.; Paula Brunl Kuhns, Colorado Springs, Colo.; Edie Landis, Telford, Pa.; Sharon Waltner, Parker, S.D.; Louise Wideman, Bluffton, Ohio; Terry Shue (staff), Kidron, Ohio; and Kathryn Rodger (staff), Elkhart, Ind.—*Mennonite Church USA staff*

"I was encouraged to pursue work where I was making a real difference."

–**David Showalter,** BS, biochemistry '09

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Constituency Leaders Council offers ideas for future

CLC also considers survey feedback, responds to leadership polity manual

Mennonite Church USA's Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) met Oct. 6–8 in Schiller Park, Ill. Eighty-two leaders representing area conferences, constituency groups and churchwide agencies reviewed results of recent surveys of leaders across the church, shared ideas about potential structures within the denomination and gave feedback on a leadership polity manual.

Donna Mast, conference minister for Allegheny Mennonite Conference, and Chuck Neufeld, conference minister for Illinois Mennonite Conference, led worship each day, inviting the group into the Emmaus Road story (Luke 24)—the theme text for the 2015 convention in Kansas City.

Survey responses

CLC members reviewed responses to a six-question survey of conference ministers about how LGBT inclusion is being discussed in their area conferences, as well as preliminary results from an August survey of credentialed Mennonite Church USA leaders. The survey had a response rate of 66.2 percent, representing 1,323 leaders.

Sociologist Conrad Kanagy continues to work on compiling, tabulating and analyzing the responses. Ervin Stutzman, Mennonite Church USA executive director, sought counsel from the CLC on how to release survey data.

CLC members raised concerns that those who completed the survey represent particular segments of the church and not the full diversity of the church in terms of age, educational background and racial-ethnic background.

"We have a snapshot, which is not perfectly focused," Stutzman said in response. "It is valid data, and we rejoice at having a high response rate, but it doesn't tell us everything we need to know."

Ideas for changes to the structure of MC USA

In September, the Executive Board appointed an ad hoc committee to explore possibilities for new structures for relationships within Mennonite Church USA. Two EB members were at the CLC meeting.

Stutzman invited each participant to spend time in prayer and provide written feedback to these questions: As you think about the possibility of restructuring Mennonite Church USA, what would you hope that we achieve? Avoid? Preserve?

"The idea of structure is broader than structure," he said. "It has more to do with polity and culture than structure—with the kind of church we are and how we relate to each other. Tell us your longings. Ask the Holy Spirit what it would look like to begin anew."

Leadership polity manual

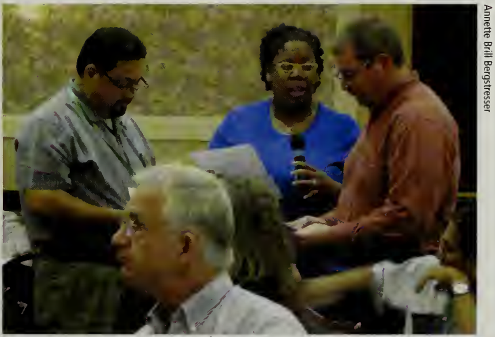
Stutzman recognized Terry Shue and Nancy Kauffmann, Executive Board staff members; and Karen Martens Zimmerly, Mennonite Church Canada staff member; for their work on this fourth revision of *A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership: Polity Manual for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA*. He said it is a working document and is to "name a common understanding of ministerial leadership."

The revised document contains a statement taken from the Membership Guidelines about credentialed pastors not being able to perform same-sex unions. It was included in 2011 in response to a request written by the conference ministers, who felt that this piece of ministerial polity should be part of the leadership polity manual.

Jewel Gingerich Longenecker, associate dean for leadership education at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind., shared from her doctoral dissertation about rethinking relationships with each other and the Bible. She challenged the group to advocate for a deepened commitment to communal Bible study across the church as a way of reclaiming our shared language and learning to speak with each other again.

In other business, CLC heard church planting updates and initiatives, appointed people to the Resolutions Committee and heard from Willard Metzger, executive director of Mennonite Church Canada.

Two constituency groups gave reports: Grace Pam of Los Angeles spoke for the African, Belizean and Caribbean Mennonite Mission Association, and Beny Krisbianto of Philadelphia reported for the Indonesian Mennonite Association.
—Annette Brill Bergstresser for Mennonite Church USA



Annette Brill Bergstresser

Byron Pellecer (left) of Wichita, Kan.; Shannon Walker Dycus of Indianapolis, Ind.; and Rodger Schmell of Perkasie, Pa., portray the disciples and Jesus on the Emmaus Road during a dramatic reading Oct. 8 at the Constituency Leaders Council meeting.

Columbus Mennonite installs pastor who is gay

Central District Conference delays licensing until after Kansas City 2015.

Columbus (Ohio) Mennonite Church installed Mark Rupp as pastor of Christian formation on Sept. 21. Rupp, who began his assignment in August, is in a committed relationship with another man.

"We are taking an important step beyond blessing and welcoming persons who identify as LGBTQ," wrote Joel Miller, pastor of Columbus Mennonite Church, in a Sept. 17 letter on the church's website. "We believe this to be a natural expression of our commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus brought the marginalized into the center and declared that theirs in the kin-dom of God."

Columbus Mennonite is a member of Central District Conference. Installation is often accompanied by a ministry license from the conference, but this is not the case for Rupp.

CDC leadership is delaying the licensing until after Kansas City 2015 in response to counsel from Mennonite Church USA leadership and several members of the Executive Board, wrote Lois Johns Kaufmann, conference minister for CDC, in an email on Oct. 14.

"Mark is a gifted pastor, called and affirmed for congregational ministry, so in many ways it is lamentable that he is not yet licensed for ministry," said Miller on Oct. 15. "We do respect CDC's wishes to be attentive to relationships within and beyond the conference and are thankful that it has committed to issue the license next July."

Rupp's installation comes less than a year after Mountain States Mennonite Conference announced its decision to license Theda Good, a pastor who is lesbian.

The Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA responded to that decision in a statement during its June meeting in Chicago.

Part of the statement requested that "no area conference grant credentials to persons in same-sex relationships unless the Mennonite Church USA delegate assembly changes the state polity on same-sex marriages."

Miller wrote in his letter: "We as a congregation are not in any danger of losing our status as members in good standing with CDC and thus in Mennonite Church USA. CDC affirms our congregational discernment in this matter, even if they're not yet ready to issue a ministry license."

Rupp preached at the installation service.

"The opportunity to serve a church in a pastoral role is something that for a long time I was not sure would ever be a possibility for me," said Rupp in his sermon. "And so I thank you for being a congregation that is willing to live into your commitment to welcome all people. I thank you for being a congregation that refuses to allow requests for patience to drown out cries of injustice."

Rupp is a student at The Methodist Theological School in Ohio (Delaware) and a Bluffton (Ohio) University graduate. He spent three years with Mennonite Voluntary Service in Hutchinson, Kan.

Columbus Mennonite conducted a pastoral search process for about six months. According to Miller, Rupp was the leading candidate.

Columbus Mennonite carried out two congregational discernment processes in 2007 and 2014 that have led to the decision to install Rupp. Out of the processes grew three commitments:

"1. Columbus Mennonite Church shall welcome into its membership all persons who confess Jesus as Lord and Savior. We will not use sexual orientation or practice as criteria for membership.

2. We affirm our pastors' full participation in pastoral care, rites and blessings for all individuals and families, including marriage preparation counseling, weddings and child dedications.

3. Sexual orientation will not be a factor in the hiring of office and pastoral staff."—*Anna Groff*

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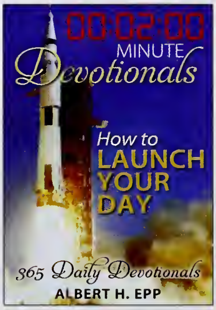

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Leaders to explore a new structure for MC USA

Executive Board prepares for the question of LGBT inclusion at Kansas City 2015.

During their meeting Sept. 25-27 in Kansas City, Mo., members of the Mennonite Church USA Executive Board (EB) grappled with plans for Kansas City 2015, where the question of LGBT inclusion in the denomination will be at the forefront.

In preparation, the EB focused on a process to explore a new structure for Mennonite Church USA, one that might satisfy those asking for inclusion and those who are opposed to inclusion by altering current relationships of conferences within the denomination.

On Sept. 26, Ervin Stutzman, executive director, said that a new vision and new structure must go hand in hand as Mennonite Church USA leaders consider changes in response to the tension surrounding the LGBT issue.

Terms for a new structure—that is not a "denomination"—include "association," "network," "alliance" and "affiliation," Stutzman said.

That day, the EB passed a motion to form an ad hoc committee to lead the exploration of a different structure with the intent of bringing an action to the delegate assembly in Kansas City.

The ad hoc committee will include two EB members, two Constituency Leaders Council (CLC) members and one additional person to be named by the committee. Joy Sutter and Isaac Villegas will represent the EB on the committee.

The CLC members include Keith Weaver, conference moderator for Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference, and Katherine Pitts, executive conference minister for Pacific Northwest Conference.

The steps for the ad hoc committee include the following:

1. Providing questions for the CLC to respond to at their meeting Oct. 6-8 in Chicago (see page 33).
2. Sharing these responses with the EB at a conference call scheduled for January 2015.
3. Going back to the CLC for further testing during the CLC meeting March 26-28, 2015.
4. Discussing these results with the EB at its April 23-25, 2015, meeting in Kansas City, Mo.
5. Finally, the EB will present ideas for a new structure to be studied by the delegate assembly in Kansas City.

The questions from the ad hoc committee for the CLC will ask CLC members to name the Mennonite Church USA resources their conference uses as well as what kind of new structures might be possible for Mennonite Church USA.

Some board members expressed concern that this timeline will appear as a stalling technique to church members wanting a more immediate response to the question of LGBT inclusion and membership guidelines.

During an executive session that lasted over five hours, one that was closed to agency CEOs and to the press, the board discussed the issue of formal space for Pink Mennos and the Brethren Mennonite Council at Kansas City 2015, the role of national conference in credentialing and the document *A Shared Understanding of Church Leadership*, according to the EB agenda.

The EB also discussed the preliminary results of the credentialed leaders survey. Conrad Kanagy, a sociologist, is working with the survey.

The EB staff is also working on a survey for delegates that is to go out early in 2015.

The EB continues to hear from constituent groups regarding the question of LGBT inclusion in Mennonite Church USA. Prior to the meeting, the board received a letter from Iglesia Menonita Hispana that reported on the IMH biennial assembly Aug. 8-9.

The letter, dated. Sept. 18, read, in part: "It was not surprising to the IMH board to hear the Hispanic pastors and delegates calling the Mennonite Church USA to keep the teaching position of the church and enforce it in all the conferences and ministers. Also, the pastors and delegates expressed the painful sentiment that most, if not all, of the Hispanic Mennonite churches will withdraw from Mennonite Church USA if the present teaching of sexuality and *Confession of Faith* is changed."

Terms for a new structure—that is not a 'denomination'—include 'association,' 'network,' 'alliance' and 'affiliation.'—Ervin Stutzman

On the evening of Sept. 25, the board met with local representatives of the Inclusive Pastors group: Joanna Harader, pastor of Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kan.; Ruth Harder, pastor of Rainbow Mennonite Church in Kansas City, Kan.; and Sarah Klaassen, pastor of a church plant in Columbia, Mo.

These women shared about their experiences as pastors working for the full inclusion of LGBT individuals in their congregations and in Mennonite Church USA.

They also brought a document to the EB outlining their hopes for inclusion and reparations.—*Anna Groff*

Community boosts health

Alyssa Schrag helps create community for San Francisco tenants, MVSers.

Alyssa Schrag

DISH (Delivering Innovation in Supportive Housing) tenants exercise and relax together during an eight-week yoga class organized by Alyssa Schrag.

The benefits of belonging to a group reach far beyond warm feelings. Alyssa Schrag, a Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS) alumna, saw remarkable psychological and emotional changes in her clients at DISH (Delivering Innovation in Supportive Housing).

DISH provides permanent homes for San Francisco residents who can't afford to pay $3,100 each month, the average cost of a one-bedroom apartment.

All DISH tenants have struggled with homelessness in the past, says Schrag. When the tenants move into an apartment of their own, Schrag learned, they often struggle with isolation and depression. Substance abuse, mental health and other disabilities can be obstacles as well.

"We provide healthy alternatives to falling back on their old habits," says Schrag.

In her two-year role as a Supportive Housing associate, Schrag helped build community among tenants in the six DISH hotels across San Francisco. She brought people together through events such as Ping-Pong tournaments, art classes, cooking classes and yoga.

Community increases self-esteem.

During her MVS assignment, Schrag used her Bethel College (North Newton, Kan.) art minor to teach classes. She noticed that as tenants experimented with different media, such as acrylic paint and papermaking, it had a beneficial impact on their emotions. They became more relaxed and proud of their work.

One man, whose name is withheld for privacy reasons, was particularly grateful for the art classes. Schrag remembers that he always attended and often brought friends.

"[These events have] done so much for the hotel. It's mellowed people out," the man said. "It's taken the embarrassment out of being an SRO." SRO stands for "single resident occupancy," which describes the type of living spaces the man rents from DISH.

Community increases motivation.

A 2012 study, referenced in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, found that a sense of belonging helped a person focus better. One study found that a group of students worked longer and harder on a problem after they were told they shared a birthday with the author of a mathematical article they read.

Over time, Schrag also saw that those who participated in the community events had more motivation. When tenants attended an event at a DISH hotel, they would often venture out afterward, into the community. Sometimes to the grocery store, other times to another art class.

"Our goal is to help tenants leave the hotel and integrate into society," Schrag says.

Community grows faith.

Living in an MVS community also had an impact on Schrag's faith.

"We had good discussions about faith, shared impromptu hymn sings and experienced faith together in a number of different ways," she says. "Living in community is a great way to grow in faith. I think it's possible to have faith without community, [but] I wouldn't choose it."

Living in community is a great way to grow in faith.—Alyssa Schrag

At the beginning of Schrag's MVS experience, she joined a group of MVS participants that she had never met. They were brought together by the common goal of serving. Schrag was particularly grateful for a road trip to Los Angeles, where the group bonded.

"It was fun to see each of our different personalities, which could sometimes conflict, mesh really well," she says

As Schrag got to know her MVS unit better and helped build community with DISH tenants, she realized that community isn't always built by common interests, as she once thought, but by commitment to each other. Aside from their struggle to keep a home, DISH tenants don't have that muc in common, and it wasn't always their choice to be together, Schrag says. "But they were still able to form community."

"I think it's pretty amazing that despite [their differences], there can be a sense of community."—*Kelsey Hochstetler of Mennonite Mission Network*

Urban Anabaptist leaders gather in Philadelphia

Participants discuss practical ministry at the Urban Ministry Symposium.

In a letter to Jerusalem's exiled leaders, the prophet Jeremiah called on them to work for the welfare of Babylon, the city to which they had been deported. "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city," he wrote. "Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jeremiah 29:7 NIV).

Nearly 100 Anabaptist leaders gathered Oct. 2-4 in Philadelphia to discuss what responding to Jeremiah's charge looks like in the 21st century.

Participants came from such cities as New York, Hampton, Va., Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., to attend the Urban Anabaptist Ministry Symposium organized by Glen Alexander Guyton, chief operating officer for Mennonite Church USA, and Chantelle Todman Moore, Philadelphia program coordinator for Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) East Coast.

> Being a peace church isn't just about not going to war; it's about manifesting God's kingdom in our own communities.—Addie Banks

The symposium invited urban leaders to discuss practical Anabaptist ministry in their cities. "Being a peace church isn't just about not going to war; it's about manifesting God's kingdom in our own communities," said speaker Addie Banks, executive director at The Groundswell Group in the Bronx, N.Y.

Banks said the symposium provided opportunities for her to learn from colleagues in new ways. "Each of us has a tool. We all need tools to do our work, and gathering here with one another is like assembling a toolkit."

During plenary sessions, Banks, Al Taylor, pastor of Infinity Mennonite Church of Harlem, New York, N.Y., and Ertell Whigham, associate pastor of Nueva Vida Norristown New Life, Norristown, Pa., and executive minister of Franconia Mennonite Conference, shared "best practices" from their ministries.

Whigham spoke about the need to develop personal connections in culturally diverse contexts. "To be intercultural in the church of God today means that I will recognize how God has blessed you in your life, and I will recognize the gift that you are to me," he said. "I will allow the Jesus in you to be the Jesus in me."

Workshop leaders drew from firsthand experience to facilitate sessions on youth and young adult ministry, education for urban leaders, immigration, developing community partnerships and dismantling oppression.

Additional event sponsors included the African-American Mennonite Association, Cookman at Emerging Ministries Corporation, the Franconia Mennonite Conference of Mennonite Church USA, Goshen (Ind.) College, Kingdom Builders Anabaptist Network of Greater Philadelphia, Mennonite Mission Network and Philadelphia FIGHT.

Symposium organizers said they hope participants will continue to connect and collaborate with one another. "I'm excited about the relationships that were forged here," said Guyton. "This gathering showed that we can all benefit from the expertise of Anabaptist leaders who are carrying out practical ministry in their own contexts."

Todman Moore hopes that urban Anabaptist leaders will convene in other cities in coming years. "We'd love to hear from Anabaptist leaders in other urban areas who are interested in discussing practical ministry in their contexts," she said. She invites leaders to contact her (215-535-3624, ChantelleTodmanMoore@mcc.org) or Guyton (574-524-5282, GlenG@MennoniteUSA.org) to discuss planning similar initiatives in other cities.—*Rachel Sommer of MCC East Coast*

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Black Mennonite women rock

Central District women's retreat celebrates faith and African-American culture.

Central District Conference invited women of all races and faith expressions to its annual women's retreat at Camp Friedenswald, Cassopolis, Mich., Sept. 12–14. "Black Mennonite Women Rock" was planned to celebrate Anabaptist-Mennonite faith through an African-American cultural style.

Ruth Lapp Guengerich wrote the following reflections on the retreat in her blog for Mennonite Women USA:

Cyneatha Millsaps, pastor at Community Mennonite Church, Markham, Ill., persists in participating in Mennonite life, though sometimes it is not sensitive to differences, especially racial and ethnic ones. When asked why more women of color do not attend retreats, Millsaps says, "Have it at a hotel. Women of color do not like to camp. They believe camp life is different from what it really is. We need to get them to the camp so they see what [it's] really like."

Millsaps capitalized on the opportunity to implement this idea, when the rotation of planning teams for Camp Friedenswald Women's Retreat fell upon the Chicago Mennonite churches of Central District. Millsaps, also president of Central District Mennonite Women, knew it would take excellent programming to bring women of color to Camp Friedenswald, especially since it is not a hotel. "If we get them there, they will have a great time. But we need to ge them to the camp, so they see how much fun it is."

Inspired by a show on Black Entertainment Network titled "Black Girls Rock," whose message is empowering young black women, Millsa coined the phrase "Black Mennonite Women Rock," which became the theme fo the 2014 women's retreat a Camp Friedenswald. The challenge was to plan a wee end that would speak to women of color but also ma white women feel welcome and involved.

Hyacinth Stevens

The theme caught the attention of many African-American women from the East Coast to Illinois. About one-third of the more than 150 registrants were women of color. Others were also attracted by the theme. The writer team of three for the MennoMedia *Shine* curriculum was i trigued and felt it was essential for them to attend, to learn the stories, experiences and needs firsthand from our siste of color, so that they write Christian education materials th speak to children of all races and ethnicities. Rose Stutzma managing editor of the *Shine* curriculum, said, "We knew i tellectually about the needs of women of color, but this weekend allowed the stories to wash over us."

Pastor Hyacinth Stevens, Bronx, N.Y., and African American Mennonite Association representative to the Me nonite Women USA board, preached messages of challenge and hope, using Genesis 16 and 21, and Psalm 139. She assured everyone that God's promise will transform our story from confusion and illusion to one of hope and confidence.

Stevens preached passionately about the dilemma of Hagar and Sara, who were more intimate than owner and slave, yet when the boundaries were crossed, the intimacy turned into mistrust and jealousy. We were challenged to recognize that as women we are all grafted together, we ca not be separated and need to learn to overcome our discom fort with differences, celebrating our need for each other.

A final Communion service, led by Addie Banks, a pasto and the mother of speaker Hyacinth Stevens, brought women together around tables to share in the symbols of Christ's body and blood.—*Ruth Lapp Guengerich of Mennonite Women USA*

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Land and Christian discipleship

Bible a clear focus in Rooted and Grounded conference hosted by AMBS

Three keynote speakers and 53 workshops and paper presentations brought Old Testament, New Testament, theological, historical and personal perspectives to the Rooted and Grounded conference held Sept. 18-20 at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Ind.

With the sub-theme, "A Conference on Land and Christian Discipleship," the event provided opportunities for pastors, theologians, farmers and other creation care advocates and practitioners to work and talk together. More than 170 people participated, with about half coming from Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. Others represented a variety of mainline and evangelical faith groups from across North America.

The first keynote speaker was S. Roy Kaufman, retired Mennonite pastor and author of *Healing God's Earth: Rural Community in the Context of Urban Civilization* (Wipf and Stock, 2013). Ellen Davis, a professor at Duke Divinity School, Durham, N.C., and Barbara Rossing, a professor at Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, also spoke.

Jason Bryant

S. Roy Kaufman gives a keynote address.

One goal of the conference planners was to have a clear focus on the Bible in the conversations about land and creation care. "Caring for creation is deeply important, but it's important because it's in the biblical text," said Ryan Harker, AMBS student and co-chair of the planning committee. "The conference felt like one big Bible study."

In his address, Kaufman drew not only on the Bible but also from his 38 years pastoring rural congregations in South Dakota, Saskatchewan, Iowa and Illinois. In contrast to a dominant culture that focuses on consumption, Kaufman said, "we have many models of traditional agrarian cultures that through long experience of living together on the land have learned to live sustainably and productively on the earth. Our Native American brothers and sisters are the primary examples of that. These agrarian cultures and traditional peoples, including the Israelites and Christian communities of rural America today, hold the best promise of being able to shape a sustainable future for the human family and to bring healing to this earth of God's creation."

Davis, who is author of *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), gave participants lenses through which to view our place in relation to God and the land.

Referring to the story in John 6 of Jesus feeding the crowd, David said, "We have lost confidence that we can have enough without overproducing, without hoarding, without laying waste to our land. This story speaks of the daily generosity of God working through the created order."

Davis' final lens was Leviticus 26:42, a verse that emphasizes the importance of the land. "The Bible envisions a covenantal relationship ... among God, people and land. All three of those partners are essential to God's design for the managing of the world."

Rossing, author of *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (Basic Books, 2004), focused on the Revelation 22 vision of the tree of life. "We are ill. Our world is ill," she said. "The church has an amazing moment right now to speak to this issue for mission—to claim this moment for healing, for revitalizing local communities, for rediscovering abundant life."

The countercultural communities of the New Testament, Rossing said, "created village communities right in the midst of the city, right in the midst of the Roman empire—joyful communities that lived differently."

Rossing called on Christians to follow this example and the example of Jesus. "We are called to live according to that compelling, joy-filled, counter-imperial vision as communities deeply grounded and rooted in the love of Jesus—a vision of abundant life gathered around that tree of life with its leaves for the healing of the nations," she said.

Presenters in small-group sessions covered topics of biblical, theological and ethical perspectives on the land and nature; the gospel of peace in relation to care for the land; climate change; the watershed discipleship movement; human relationships with nonhuman animals; intersections of spirituality and creation care; and land use.

On Oct. 3, eight immersion experiences gave participants opportunities to learn from and join in local sustainable activities. One group visited Benton (Ind.) Mennonite Church and the farm of the pastor and her family, Brenda and Rich Hostetler Meyer, to learn about the impact of settlers on Native Americans and about the farm's sustainable practices. Another group visited the Elkhart County landfill to learn about their practices to protect soil and groundwater and an organization in Goshen that turns tree and yard waste into mulch. Others visited a Community Supported Agriculture farm and picked popcorn, while another group canoed on the Elkhart River.—*Mary E. Klassen of AMBS*

A community of reconcilation and peace

Kenyan man's peacemaking leads to new churches being partners in mission.

One man has gradually transformed the warring town of Sotik, Kenya, into a community of reconciliation and peace.

George Nyaundi, a Mennonite pastor and church planter, has worked for peace in Sotik, Kenya, ever since the town erupted in violence during the controversial elections in Kenya in December 2007. Although Sotik, which borders the Nyanza province and the Rift Valley, was the site of intense conflict between two distinct people groups, the Kisii and the Kipsigi, Nyaundi worked tirelessly to bring leaders from both sides together.

Nyaundi encouraged dialogue and empathy between the two groups, birthing several vibrant, peace-seeking churches in the area during the process.

"George has done a phenomenal job of starting new churches," says Aram DiGennaro, Eastern Mennonite Missions' regional representative in East Africa. "The success of his work has attracted attention from other Kenya Mennonite Church [KMC] leaders who want to experience that kind of growth and spiritual life in their own churches."

Before the 2007 elections, the Kisii and Kipsigi had been living in relative peace with one another, although there was fairly little interaction between them. However, the election catalyzed intense conflict between the two groups, with entire families being pulled into the violence.

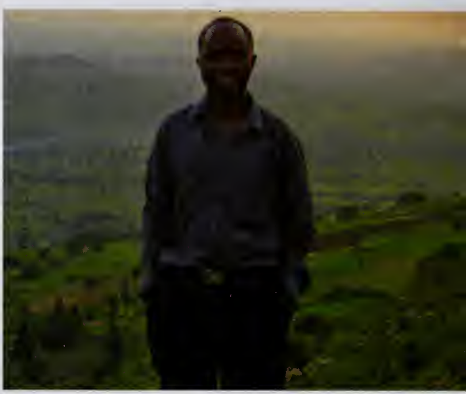
"Men wielded machetes and rifles, women carried stones to launch at homes, and children helped their parents however they could," said Nyaundi. "Even the pastors, elders, and church members were carrying guns and shooting their neighbors—those who called themselves Christians, all fighting together."

When Nyaundi heard about the bitter violence in Sotik, he was moved. He himself comes from an area where children grow up fighting, and he had repeatedly experienced the pain that comes with clashes related to tribalism, land, and similar conflicts.

"George is Kisii, but he grew up among Maasai, so he's fairly multicultural," says DiGennaro. Because of Nyaundi's identity and heart for peacemaking, a missionary asked Nyaundi to work as a peacemaker in Sotik. After praying together, they decided Nyaundi should move there.

He visited Sotik and quickly realized that the people there were hungry for reconciliation.

In May 2008, the people of Sotik asked him to start a church to help bring peace to the town. Nyaundi went door-to-door on a daily basis, visiting, sharing, encouraging and praying with people. He sought out key church and community leaders in the clashing communities, insisting they meet to dialogue about why they were actually fighting.



Pastor George Nyaundi in Kenya

"I knew that to restore peace, leaders from different tribes and churches had to come together and repent. When they did, they discovered that they shared the same pain an the same needs, despite cultural differences," says Nyaundi

Over the next year and a half, Nyaundi went to the di ferent villages around Sotik, sometimes with an EMM YES team or other neutral people to assist in mediation. Peacemakers were able to have a broad impact in Sotik since they were some of the few people who walked around openly. Many villagers were still fearful and rarely ventured out of their homes.

Now that the Kisii and the Kipsigi are openly communicating and living together, Nyaundi's focus has shifted from active peacemaking to leadership development and church growth. Mennonite churches that transcend the cultural ba riers that used to keep Christians from fellowshiping together have been planted in Sotik. In a setting where once tribes could literally not cross the road to the "wrong" church, the Christians of Sotik now feel that God has called them to be agents of reconciliation between people groups. While both the Kisii and the Kipsigi recognize the importance of their distinctive cultural identities, they also recognize the importance of unity within diversity.

Today leaders in Sotik regularly meet to pray and work for the good of the whole community.

"It is peace itself we are doing, in a biblical perspective," says Nyaundi. "And that's my joy, to see these people work together, moving from being separate to fulfilling the Great Commission together."—*Amanda Miller and Chris Fretz of EMM*

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EB commends resources on sexual and gender identity

Congregations and individuals are to engage in prayerful study before KC2015

Growing out of their statement released in June, Mennonite Church USA Executive Board members commended a list of biblical and theological resources on sexual and gender identity for study across the denomination during their Sept. 25-27 meeting in Kansas City, Mo.

Compiled by staff members with the help of individuals across the church, the resource list represents a spectrum of perspectives and is meant to encourage dialogue and understanding among diverse groups.

They recommend the resources to congregations and individuals for prayerful study and discussion before the Mennonite Church USA convention and Delegate Assembly in Kansas City, Mo. (June 30-July 5, 2015).

These resources focus on biblical and theological hermeneutics (the lenses through which we read the Bible) and LGBT sexuality, and they represent a variety of perspectives held by individuals across our church.

The Mennonite Church USA resource on Agreeing and Disagreeing in Love, which is modeled on a biblical understanding of reconciliation, suggests that—especially in times of conflict—we are called to "go to the other in the spirit of humility. Be quick to listen. Be slow to judge."

The following people compiled the list:

- Rachel Springer Gerber, denominational minister of youth and young adults (with help from the Mennonite Church USA Youth Ministry Leadership Team)
- Felipe Hinojosa, assistant professor of history at Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas

> These resources focus on biblical and theological hermeneutics (the lenses through which we read the Bible) and LGBT sexuality, and they represent a variety of perspectives held by individuals across our church.

- Iris de León-Hartshorn, director of transformative peacemaking for Mennonite Church USA
- Harold Miller, pastor of Trissels Mennonite Church, Broadway, Va.
- Mark Thiessen Nation, professor at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Va.
- Carol Wise of Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests.

Note: If you would like resources to use in talking with youth and young adults about sexuality, gender and identity, please feel free to contact Rachel Springer Gerber, denominational minister of youth and young adults, for a list of suggested reading material.

To see the list of resources, go to http://www.mennoniteusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Biblical_Theological-Resources.pdf.

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From potatoes to doughnuts, a path out of poverty

Nigerian woman learns income-generation skills and changes her life.

David Klassen

Using MCC-supported job training and a small loan, Rhoda Markos started her own business and earned enough money to build the house with cement floors and tin roof behind her.

Rhoda Markos, her husband and three children lived in a rural village near Jos, Nigeria, working as subsistence farmers—eating what they grew and selling what they could to generate a minimal income. Like 60 percent of Nigerians in 2011, her family survived on less than $1 a day.

When Markos' newborn baby developed a high fever, she had no money to purchase medicine. The local pharmacist refused her credit, even though she begged because half the village already owed the pharmacy money. A kind person gave her enough money for transportation to get to the nearest hospital and back, but at the hospital her child died.

In Nigeria, a dead body must be carried in a special, hired vehicle. Markos could not afford that with the money remaining in her pocket. So she strapped her dead baby on her back and boarded the next public bus back to her village. The family buried the baby the next day.

Markos was deeply troubled by this experience. She vowed she would do everything she could so that she and her family would never have to experience that kind of vulnerability again.

Around that time, Markos learned that a woman was coming to her village to teach income-generation skills. Markos didn't know it yet, but the woman was Margaret Ahmed, executive director from Home Makers, a long-time partner of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).

Home Makers is an interfaith organization that empowers Nigerian women to support their families financially. MCC supports Home Makers financially, helping Ahmed and her staff offer income-generation and business-development training, cooperative-savings groups and microloans. In addition, group leaders train women to resolve conflicts and encourage religious cooperation in their neighborhoods.

Markos knew this practical training was what she needed. She still had no money, and the cost of the training, she heard, was 200 niara ($1.22). She tried to sell the potatoes she had just harvested, but she found no buyers. She thought she was defeated again.

The next day, Ahmed arrived in the village and began setting up for the five-day skills training workshop. When Ahmed saw Markos hanging around the edges, Ahmed asked her if she would be joining the group. When Markos explained her predicament, Ahmed responded by buying Markos' potatoes.

During the next five days, Ahmed taught the women five business skills they could use to generate income for themselves—making bread, doughnuts, pomade, soap and hair cream. Markos was inspired by making doughnuts, so she accepted the 10,000 niara ($61) startup loan Ahmed offered.

During the next 10 months, Markos built a successful business selling doughnuts to the students of secondary and primary schools and was able to pay off the loan, making regular payments.

Three years later, Markos has expanded her business interests and is now raising pigs as well. She has vacated her leaky, thatched-roof, mud hut for a permanent cement floor and tin-roof house that she built herself. She pays the school fees for her children. As a recognized businesswoman in the village, she is frequently consulted by the leaders.

With her developing skills, Markos is determined she will never again experience abject poverty.—*David Klassen of MCC*

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The future of *The Mennonite*

The digital revolution is rapidly changing the world of communication.

For over 100 years, Kodak dominated the photographic scene in North America. At one point, the filmmaker commanded an 89-percent market share of photographic film sales in the United States. Its slogan, a “Kodak moment,” became part of the common lexicon.

But in 2012, Kodak went bankrupt. Why? It forgot what business it was in.

Since Kodak was so successful in selling film, it made the mistake of thinking it was in the film business. It wasn't. Kodak was in the memory and image preservation business; film was just the way people preserved their memories and made images until the digital revolution took over.

By not remembering what business it was in, Kodak was steamrolled by the digital revolution.

It didn't have to be this way. Few people know it, but a Kodak employee invented the digital camera. In 1975, Steve Sasson created a new process that he called “filmless photography.”

During Thomas' tenure as editor, *The Mennonite* [grew] from a print magazine to a content-distribution system for Mennonite Church USA.—Barth Hague

You can just imagine how Kodak reacted when it heard the word “filmless.” It rejected Sasson's invention, fearing what it could do to its lucrative film business.

With enough courage, Kodak could have embraced Sasson's invention and ridden the digital wave into the future. But it didn't. Kodak was held hostage to what was working at that time—film—instead of what would work down the road.

As a result, Kodak missed the opportunity of a lifetime.

Last year, *The Mennonite*, the magazine of Mennonite Church USA, published a press release about the resignation of its editor, Everett Thomas.

In the press release, Everett's contribution was recognized. Said Barth Hague, board chair of The Mennonite, Inc., “During Thomas' tenure as editor, *The Mennonite* has grown from a print magazine to a content-distribution system for Mennonite Church USA.”

“Content distribution system.” That was the first time I had heard that phrase. What, I wondered, did it mean?

So I called Hague, vice president for University Relation and chief marketing officer at Wichita (Kan.) State University.

“We're transitioning from being a magazine to a content-distribution system,” he said of how The Mennonite, Inc., offers a traditional print magazine, website, blogs, podcasts, video and a weekly ezine called *TMail*.

“The traditional methods of sharing content are waning—it's rapidly becoming digital now,” he said. “The media are being transformed.”

And it's not just the media that are being transformed, h said.

“The audience is also being transformed. The way they access content and participate with content providers. They are moving away from buying content to accessing it and interacting with it.”

On one level, it seems to be working for The Mennonite Inc. Visits to the website are growing, as is the circulation c *TMail*.

On another level, however, things are still challenging.

Like many publications, *The Mennonite* can't get people to pay for online content. And advertisers don't want to pay top dollar for ads on websites—or even buy any advertising at all.

Despite the challenges, Hague says the change is unavoidable. Circulation for the print magazine is aging and declining.

“The number one reason for losing readers is death,” he said of *The Mennonite*'s declining circulation. Those print readers “are not being replaced.”

After talking to Hague, I wondered, Are other publications thinking of themselves in the same way—as content distribution systems? And if so, what does that mean for edtors?

I found an answer on *The Guardian*'s media blog.

“You're not, in any traditional sense, editing the news,” writes Peter Preston about the role of editors today. “You're an intermediary-cum-overseer, manipulating it to best effect, steering rather than decision-making.”

According to Preston, journalism today, “via web or app, can still be fine and probing, but it cannot be edited in any strict sense, anymore than TV cable news churning day and night.”

The digital age, he went on to say, “is making editors redundant.”

To emphasize the point, Preston suggests that editors today “book your seats, no more than a dozen years hence, for the first annual conference of the Society of Aggregators Moderators and Administrators.”

Preston wasn't the only one seeing it this way. So is Cindy Royal, a professor of journalism at Texas State University.

According to Royal, all editors are techies now. "If you are a journalism educator or media professional, I have news for you," she says. "We work in tech."

That's not what editors and reporters signed up for when they entered the profession of journalism 20, 10 or even five years ago, she went on to say. But things have changed.

"While some of the tenets of the profession we formerly knew as journalism have remained, workflows, business practices, participants and competitors are all very different," she says.

"Internet and web technologies don't just represent a new medium where print and multimedia can live in harmony. The ways we communicate both personally and professionally have been profoundly altered. Communication is technology, and technology is communication. That's the true convergence."

This is not the first time the world has experienced a communications revolution. One of the biggest happened more than 500 years ago, when Gutenberg invented the printing press.

Church newspapers and magazines are not in the publishing business; they are in the information sharing and community connection business.

Like with today's digital revolution, it turned things upside down. As Elizabeth Eisenstein notes in her book *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*, people back then struggled to understand and come to terms with the unsettling changes wrought by Gutenberg and his invention.

It took about 100 years for the full impact of the printing press to be felt, she concludes. During that time, jobs were lost, whole new jobs and industries were created, and institutions and belief systems were challenged and changed.

It was, she writes, a chaotic and uncertain time—a time much like today. The big difference between then and now, though, is the speed at which the change is occurring. This time, it won't take 100 years. But the uncertainty is the same; nobody really knows what is coming next.

Clay Shirky is one of the leading experts on the affect of the Internet today. Reflecting on the changes happening in the world of communications, he says: "During revolutions, the old stuff gets broken faster than the new stuff is put in its place. The importance of any given experiment isn't apparent at the moment it appears; big changes stall, small changes spread. Even the revolutionaries can't predict what will happen."

One thing is for sure: Print is no longer going to be the main way people share information. The respected Annenberg School of Communication at the University of Southern California predicts that, due to falling circulation and advertising revenues, most print newspapers in north America will not exist in five years.

Closer to home, editors of church publications are a bit more optimistic. Over 40 percent of members of the Canadian Church Press say their print publications will not exist in 10 years—so there's a bit more time to hold a paper magazine in your hands.

So what should the editors of the *The Mennonite* do? How can they, and the church it serves, prepare for this new digital future? I can think of a few things.

Remember what business it is in. Just as Kodak was not in the film business, church newspapers and magazines are not in the publishing business. They are in the information sharing and community connection business. Publishing—whether it's a magazine or a newspaper—just happens to be the format that has been the most effective and economical for the past 500 years.

When we confuse the way business is conducted with the real business we are in, opportunities can be missed. But what are those opportunities? The web and social media, certainly. But that can't be all. Instead of publishing content, in paper or online, magazines could itinerate speakers, set up neighborhood salons, hold symposiums and conferences, make videos or do podcasts. All these things involve communication, and none of them involves printing.

Ask the right question. A question that is on the mind of many today is, What is the future of books, magazines and newspapers? But that's the wrong question. It's akin to somebody in the 1960s watching the decline of train travel and asking, What's the future of passenger trains? The better question would have been, What is the future of transportation?

Why is that a better question? It's better because railroads didn't end up being the only way to transport people. As we know, by the late 1960s the passenger train was mostly dead, replaced by airplanes and cars on highways.

It's similar for books, magazines and newspapers. The better question is, What's the future of sharing information? Why is this a better question? The need to share information and communicate will always exist, but the need for physical books, magazines or newspapers may not.

People will still seek information and want to communicate. They will just do it differently. Figuring out how they will communicate in the future will become the Holy Grail for the newspaper, magazine and book industries. But finding the answer starts with asking the right question.

Stop thinking about publishing schedules. For centuries, the most economical way to share information was by bundling it into daily, weekly, biweekly or monthly packages. Printing and mailing each article, when it was done, would have been folly—and a sure path to financial ruin.

This isn't about the future of *The Mennonite*; it's about the future of communication and information sharing in Mennonite Church USA.

Those printing and mailing constraints don't exist anymore. Today, if an article is finished, it can be released to the public immediately. The idea of making people wait a month to hear what happened at a conference of convention is completely archaic today. It's a sure path to a different kind of ruin—the ruin of irrelevance.

Today, when people can tweet about events in real time, nobody wants to wait days or weeks or longer to read a summary of what happened.

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Publishing schedules were set up for the convenience o the publication and the publishers and editors—not the rea ers. The Internet has flipped that on its head.

Use social media to find solutions. Quirky is the name o a new company that builds products dreamed up by amateu inventors. From its office in New York City, it invites all sorts of slap-dash doodlers from around the world to send ideas for overcoming challenges and problems—no matter how strange, weird or fantastic. Quirky then takes the best ideas, giving them to skilled engineers, who take them through the design, manufacturing and distribution process

This new way of solving problems is called "combinatorial innovation"—taking the idea of crowd-sourcing beyond its traditional use of raising money and using it to create new products. As one of Quirky's founders put it: "There a tons of creative ideas out there. The greatest thing about digital technology is that it's easier than ever to get lots of eyeballs looking [at] our biggest problems."

Right now, many editors and publishers view social med as the enemy. But what if it was viewed as a friend and a wa to find the future? What if publications acted like Quirky? Opening up the conversation about the future publications could be a game changer—not just because there would be more shots on goal but also because they would come from surprising angles and from people no one expected.

Finally, make sure the church is part of the conversation. This isn't about the future of *The Mennonite*; it's abou the future of communication and information sharing in Mennonite Church USA. The health of both the magazine and the church are inextricably linked. How does the churc want to build community? How does it want to hear from it members? How does it want to be a witness to the world?

If the denomination values communication, maybe it needs to step up and replace the lost advertising revenue that threatens the future of *The Mennonite* today. Maybe a new model for supporting an independent voice for members of the denomination is needed. Without the active participation of the church, there's a good chance the magazin could disappear. It's an issue that needs to be on the agend at future national assemblies.

Looking ahead, the situation publications like *The Mennonite* find themselves in today reminds me of the old joke about the traveller who is lost in rural Ireland. He stops a farmer and asks, "How do I get to Dublin?" Replies the farmer, "Well, if that's where you want to go, I wouldn't sta from here."

But here is where we are. Where we go next is anyone's guess.—*John Longhurst has been involved in communicatio for over 30 years and currently directs communications and marketing for Canadian Foodgrains Bank.*

Largest Honduran Anabaptist groups reconcile

Amor Viviente and Iglesia Evangelica Menonita Hondureña come together.

After decades of misunderstanding and little collaboration, Amor Viviente and Iglesia Evangelica Menonita Hondureña (IEMH), the two largest Anabaptist groups in Honduras, have publicly reconciled with each other and are actively working at improving their relationship.

In August 2013, leaders from both groups met with other church leaders from around the world at the Holy Spirit in Missions Conference in Changi Cove, Singapore. The conference was organized by the International Missions Association (IMA), an association of Anabaptist mission bodies established for prayer, mutual support and partnership.

As conference participants gathered to share in the Lord's Supper, Carlos Marín Montoya, president of Amor Viviente, publicly asked for forgiveness from Adalid Romero, president of IEMH, for "all the damage you have received from us in the past."

"Brother, you are forgiven," said Romero, and the two groups committed to mutual forgiveness, fellowship, collaboration, and support between the groups.

Momentum for improving the relationship has grown, and leaders of both groups are taking concrete steps to encourage fellowship at all levels of the church. In July, Montoya accepted an invitation to attend the annual assembly of IEMH in La Ceiba.

"I was invited to give a series of talks to pastors and leaders from across the country who participated in the assembly," says Montoya. "There Adalid and I informed them of what happened in Singapore, and they were pleased with our testimony and gave a vote of affirmation for walking together more closely and forgetting what has happened in the past."

While the two churches never engaged in large-scale conflict with each other, there have been tensions between them since the 1970s.

IEMH was established in 1950 through the work of several missionary families from Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM), including James and Beatrice Hess and James and Rhoda Sauder. The church began in the city of Trujillo, a maritime port two to three hours from the nearest city, La Ceiba, and ministered primarily to the rural poor in the area.

Amor Viviente was established in the 1970s by EMM workers Ed and Gloria King, who developed a ministry to youth immersed in drugs and alcohol, along with others from broken homes. Amor Viviente became a fast-growing charismatic discipleship movement that spread throughout Honduras.

"Both churches are very holistic, but historically they've had different approaches to ministry," says Steve Shank, pioneering coach at EMM. "This led to some misperceptions about each other and some miscommunication in the past. But now that they've reconciled, good relationships are being built."

In September, Shank visited both groups with Nelson Okanya, EMM president; Brian Martin, chair of the EMM board of directors; and Antonio Ulloa, EMM's church revitalization coach.

"During our visit, we got to see Javier [a leader from Amor Viviente] and Adalid sitting and chatting together," says Ulloa. "I turned to Nelson and Brian and said, 'I love this. This is new.' They were laughing and joking with each other. Carlos and Javier were friends with Adalid before he became the president of the Mennonite Church [IEMH], which made it easier for them to reconcile than for past leaders of these churches."

While Okanya has had contact with both churches in the past, this was his first visit to Honduras.

"I was very moved by the ministries of both Amor Viviente and the Honduran Mennonite Church [IEMH]," says Okanya. "While they have different histories, it is clear that they are both faithfully pursuing their call to make disciples for Christ in Honduras and beyond. This is a new, positive chapter in their relationship in which they can learn together and support each other in their mutual mission as agents of transformation for the kingdom of God."—*Chris Fretz of EMM*

Photo provided by Javier Soler

Adalid Romero, president of Iglesia Evangelica Menonita Hondureña, and Carlos Marín Montoya, president of Amor Viviente, embrace at the Holy Spirit in Mission Conference in Singapore in August 2013.

WORKERS

Horning, Daniel, was licensed as pastor of Gospel Hill Mennonite Church, Fulks Run, Va., on June 1.

Hower, Dawn Ranck, was installed as lead pastor of New Holland Mennonite Church, New Holland, Pa., on Sept. 14.

Keener, Randal, was licensed as lead pastor of Witmer Heights Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on Sept. 15.

Mininger, Katie, was licensed as chaplain for support for prison ministries at Mellinger Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on Oct. 5.

Olson-Getty, Dayna, was licensed as associate pastor at Community Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

Sensenig, Peter, was installed as three-month interim pastor of Bowmansville Mennonite Church, East Earl, Pa., on Sept. 1.

Swanson, David, was installed as pastor of Pittsburgh Mennonite Church, Pittsburgh, Pa., on Sept. 28.

Tobin, George "Skip," III, was ordained at Harrisonburg (Va.) Mennonite Praise Fellowship as USA Ministries Director with the Virginia Mennonite Missions Board, on Aug. 17.

Weaver, Roger, was licensed as a member of the preaching team at Mellinger Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on Sept. 28.

Yoder, Kara, was licensed as associate pastor for youth and young adults at Mt. Clinton Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., on Aug. 10.

OBITUARIES

Blough, Janet R. King, 79, Hollsopple, Pa., died Sept. 17. Spouse: Charles L. Blough (deceased). Parents: Standford and Margaret Hemminger King. Children: Susan Stibolt, Judy Emerick; six grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 20 at Thomas Mennonite Church, Hollsopple.

Brunner, Paul Derstine, 89, Hesston, Kan., died Sept. 14. Spouse: Grace Derstine Brunner. Parents: Edgar and Anna Brunner. Children: Beverly Ann Goertzen, Jon Scott; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Sept. 18 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

Buller, Eldo Benjamin, 86, Tremont, Ill., died April 9. Spouse: Nelda May Litwiller Buller. Parents: David E. and Sarah Kroeker Buller. Children: Sarah Fenton, Joel, Mary Gilliom; five grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: April 19 at Hopedale Mennonite Church, Hopedale, Ill.

Delagrange, James L., 71, Woodburn, Ind., died Sept. 21, of cancer. Spouse: Marie Eicher Delagrange (deceased). Parents: Joseph and Anna Delagrange. Children: Jeff, Jayne Delagrange Newala, Melissa Freehling, Mike; 11 grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 26 at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo, Ind.

Dutcher, D. Jon, 64, Harrisonburg, Va., died Sept. 2. Spouse: Violet Ann Kurtz Dutcher. Parents: Frank G. and Gertrude Lydia Maust Dutcher. Children: Chadwick Jon, Alicia Love Dutcher Tengler, Katie Ann Dutcher Ech-Chahi, Lydia Ruth Dutcher Wechselberger; two grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 6 at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg.

Frey, Evelyn J. Prowant, 80, Wauseon Ohio, died Sept. 22, following an extende illness. Spouse: Merle E. Frey. Parents: Ernest and Maye Shank Prowant. Childre Larry, Donald, Terry, Laura Jean, Glen; nin grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Sept. 26 at West Clinton Mennonit Church, Wauseon.

Garber, Melva Darlene Yoder, 90, Al bany, Ore., died Aug. 28. Spouse: Eugene Garber (deceased). Parents: Joseph and Ella Miller Yoder. Children: Karen Reed, Ken, Jim, Dan, Marlene Sherfy, Ron; 12 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren. Memorial service: Sept. 3 at Sweet Home Mennonite Church, Sweet Home, Ore.

Gotwals, Robert "Bob" S., 85, Telforc Pa., died Aug. 26. Spouse: Lucille Y. Yoder Gotwals (deceased). Parents: Clayton K. Gotwals and Lillian Schueck Gotwals Kul Children: Susan M. Gotwals Lehman, R. Brent, Christopher K., seven grandchildre three step-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 6 at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, Blooming Glen, Pa.

Jantz, Marjorie J., 92, Kansas City, Kan died Sept. 12. Spouse: Willard Kurt Jantz (deceased). Parents: Paul and Margaretha Ensz Enz. Children: Margaret Gingerich, Kurt Jantz, Dr. Keith Jantz; six grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Memoria service: Sept. 19 at Rainbow Mennonite Church, Kansas City.

Kaufman, Reda P. Alwine, 93, Boswel Pa., died July 11. Spouse: Richard Kaufma (deceased). Parents: John and Pearl Thomas Alwine. Children: Verna Horner, Rachel Horner, Richard Jr., Ellis, Allen; 11 grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren; or great-great-grandchild. Funeral: July 15 a Thomas Mennonite Church, Hollsopple, P

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Leander, Jill L Roth, 49, Morton, Ill., died Sept. 7. Spouse: Todd Leander. Parents: Herbert and Darlene Roth Roth. Children: Ryan, Blake. Funeral: Sept. 11 at First Mennonite Church, Morton.

Litwiller, Gladys K. Martin, 95, Hopedale, Ill., died July 23. Spouse: Lawrence J. Litwiller (deceased). Parents: Elmer and Clara Nafziger Martin. Children: Larry Wayne, Don, Myron; four grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 2 at Hopedale Mennonite Church.

Lyndaker, Kermit L., 82, Lowville, N.Y., died Sept. 16. Spouse: Eydie Wallis Lyndaker. Parents: Reuben and Adah M. Lehman Lyndaker. Children: Brad, Beth Ryder; three grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 20 at First Mennonite Church, New Bremen, N.Y.

Miller, Gladys June, 89, Wellman, Iowa, died Sept. 14. Parents: Ortis W. and Anna Hochstetler Miller. Celebration of life service: Sept. 17 at Powell Funeral Home, Wellman.

Schoch, Emil, 94, Archbold, Ohio, died Sept. 7. Spouse: Barbara Steven Schoch. Parents: Franz and Helene Schoch. Children: Carole Bierwiler, Elaine Wenger, Rita Sims, Lori Ellinger, James; 12 grandchildren; 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 13 at Lockport Mennonite Church, Stryker, Ohio.

Shelly, Viola Rose Lehman, 97, Hesston, Kan., died Sept. 20. Spouse: Andrew Rickert Shelly (deceased). Parents: William and Caroline Flueckiger Lehman. Children: David, Linda. Funeral: Sept. 29 at First Mennonite Church, Newton, Kan.

Springer, Donna L. Bitner, 81, Normal, Ill., died Aug. 8. Spouse: Ronald G. Springer. Parents: Russell M. and Vera Lounsberry Bitner. Children: Camille Springer, Barry, Chris. Funeral: Aug. 13 at Hopedale Mennonite Church, Hopedale, Ill.

Strauss, Blondine J. Jost, 93, Nappanee, Indiana, died of Alzheimer's disease on July 24. Spouse: Lyle Keith Strauss (deceased). Parents: Abram R. and Kathryn Willems Jost. Children: Karen Strauss Nichols, Keith Jerel Strauss; two grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Aug. 17 at Yoder-Culp Funeral Home, Goshen.

Wiens, Martha Regehr, 96, Inman, Kan., died Sept. 15. Spouse: Levi E. Wiens (deceased). Parents: George A. and Justina Klassen Regehr. Child: Eunice Elaine Wiens. Funeral: Sept. 20 at Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman.

Yoder, Henry C., 86, Mount Joy, Pa., died Aug. 29. Spouse: Freida E. Yoder (deceased). Parents: Claude E. and Olive Tice Yoder. Children: Carl W., Grant W., Kenneth L., Dwight W.; seven grandchildren; 21 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 2 at Erisman Mennonite Church, Manheim, Pa.

Yoder, Lourene Helen Bachman, 90, Iowa City, Iowa, died Sept. 21. Spouse: Arnold A. Yoder (deceased). Parents: Aaron R. and Emma Elsie Egli Bachman. Children: Emma Lee Brenneman, James, Noreen Yoder, Reginald, Steve, Cheri Cole, Gene, Don Henson; 19 grandchildren; 28 great-grandchildren; seven great-great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 25 at First Mennonite Church, Iowa City.

Yoder, Marilyn J. Burkholder, 84, Goshen, Ind., died Sept. 15. Spouse: Vernon Yoder (deceased). Parents: LaVern and Dora Miller Burkholder. Children: Anita Kehr, Curt, Chris, Diane Yoder; seven grandchildren; one great-grandchild. Funeral: Sept. 18 at Waterford Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Zook, Marvin Leroy, 85, Hesston, Kan., died Aug. 28. Spouse: Dorothy Reber Zook. Parents: Edward and Nancy Hershberger Zook. Children: Steven Zook, Rodney Zook, Monica; step-children: Lonnie Martin, Kim Boarders, Dan Pyles; nine grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 3 at Hesston Mennonite Church.

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I certify that all information furnished in this is true and complete.
Anna Groff, Editor

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Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., seeks qualified applicants for a **full-time director** of the Sadie A. Hartzler Library. EMU seeks a director who will lead the staff in achieving its common vision (see www.emu.edu/library/library-mission/). The director will provide leadership for an experienced and highly competent team of professionals and support staff known for its service orientation. The position includes coordination of all aspects of the library, including its special collections and its collections in related sites. The director will participate in the teaching role as part of EMU's information literacy program, and is expected to have current knowledge and skills in the use of information technology in library services. The successful candidate will be an efficient administrator who advocates for the library within the institution, values a collaborative style of servant leadership, mentors the staff in growing and becoming their best, and has excellent communication skills. EMU seeks persons committed to a Christian liberal arts environment who are supportive of Anabaptist/Mennonite Christian faith. The Hartzler Library serves undergraduate, graduate, and seminary programs. Special features include the Menno Simons Historical Library, an extensive scholarly research collection of Anabaptist and Mennonite history, thought, and life materials, including rare 16th and 17th century works along with current books and journals. An ALA-accredited MLS or MLIS degree is required, with additional graduate work in a scholarly field preferred. Extensive library experience, including library instruction and leadership, is expected. This full-time 12-month position begins July 1, 2015, with an earlier or later start date negotiable. Submit application letter, curriculum vitae, transcripts (unofficial) and three letters of reference to provost@emu.edu. For more information visit www.emu.edu/library. Persons who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EMU is an equal opportunity employer, committed to enhancing diversity across the institution.

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Eastern Mennonite University seeks qualified applicants for **full-time Associate Director of Development for CJP**. The position is responsible to seek funds for the ongoing operations and special projects of the university with priority given to the Center of Justice and Peacebuilding. The focus of this position is t generate financial resources for CJP by making individual contact Bachelor's degree required. Fund-raising experience in academic, no-profit sector or business environment preferred. Experience in banking, finance, insurance or related fields helpful. Able to take initiative, set goals, relate well to people; cooperative team playe creative and industrious; possesses administrative, planning, writing, and appropriate computer skills; able to counsel donors on issues related to philanthropy; possesses knowledge and understanding of the Mennonite Church and its structures; available to travel. Submit application, resumé, and contact information for three references to: hr@emu.edu. For more information visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanresources. Persons who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Seattle Mennonite Church seeks an experienced **lead pastor** for our multi-staff congregation with a strong commitment t Anabaptist theology and values, community development and involvement, radical hospitality, and conference involvement. Seattle Mennonite is a publicly affirming congregation. A position description, including contact information, is available on www.seattlemennonite.org/leadership.

Western District Conference seeks an **Associate Conference Minister** to mentor pastors and resource churches in Texas and to network and support District-wide church planting initiatives. Western District is looking for candidates with a deep commitment to the Mennonite Church and to Anabaptist faith and values. M. Div or near equivalency expected. Church planting and/or pastoral ministry experience required. Multi-cultural, urba ministry background preferred. Texas location anticipated. Spanis helpful. A fuller job description appears at mennowdc.org. Please send cover letter, resumé, and your Ministerial Leadership Information form to Clarence Rempel, Conference Minister, Western District Conference, P.O. Box 306, North Newton, KS 67117 or to clarencer@mennowdc.org. Individuals who bring diversity are welcome to apply.

Is there a Mennonite spirituality? Read **Present Tense: A Mennonite Spirituality** by Gordon Houser to learn how Mennonite spiritual practices may succeed or fall short of what lies at the heart of Mennonite spirituality. Available for $16.95 from Cascadia Publishing House. Order from cascadiapublishinghouse.com amazon.com or bn.com.

Eastern Mennonite University is seeking applicants for an **adjunct instructor in biology**. Teaching load (5 SH) as an instructor of biological explorations, an undergraduate introductory, non-majors biology course. Responsibilities include teaching lectures and laboratory sessions as well as maintaining weekly office hours. Spring semester. Interest in teaching, experience desirable. Doctorate in biology (ABD acceptable) preferred or minimal of 18 graduate hours of biology. Submit letter of application, curriculum vitae, transcripts (unofficial acceptable at first), recent course evaluations and two letters of reference to: Tara Kishbaugh, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802. For more information visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanresources. Persons who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Are you gifted in sharing a relevant Anabaptist vision inspiring to the church today? **Blooming Glen Mennonite Church** (www.bgmc.net) is seeking a dynamic and dedicated **lead pastor** with strong preaching and leadership skills. We are people on a journey with Jesus committed to growing together in a nurturing community of believers. Our congregation is located in Pennsylvania, halfway between Philadelphia and Allentown. Our weekly attendance is approximately 330. If you are interested in exploring the possibilities at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, please visit the church website for details and email the search committee at bgmcpastorsearch@gmail.com.

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RESOURCES

Ellie: Book One, Ellie's People by Mary Christner Borntrager (Herald Press, 2014, $7.99) tells the fictional story of a young Old Order Amish girl in the early 1900s who wants to wear bright dresses and perfume and doesn't like her father's strict ideas. She goes through adolescence and experiences romance, tragedy and the comfort of God's presence. It is for ages 10 and up.

Renegade Amish: Beard Cutting, Hate Crimes and the Trial of the Bergholz Barbers by Donald B. Kraybill (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014, $24.95) tells how this series of Amish-on-Amish attacks shattered the peace of a peace-loving people and led to a new interpretation of the federal hate crime law. It goes behind the scenes to tell the full story of the Bergholz barbers: the attacks, the investigation, the trial and the aftermath.

Oriented to Faith: Transforming the Conflict over Gay Relationships by Tim Otto (Cascade Books, 2014, $17) tells the story of Otto being gay and what that taught him about the gospel. The book explores how God is at work in the world, even amid the most difficult circumstances, redeeming and transforming the church in this difficult debate.

Inspired: The Holy Spirit and the Mind of Faith by Jack Levison (Eerdmans, 2013, $24) works to recover the early conception of the Holy Spirit as something given to all flesh as part of creation—a spirit now less divine or holy than the spirit one might receive through charismatic endowments. **Inspired: Study Guide** by Jack Levison and Ronald Herms (Eerdmans, 2014, $5) will help church groups and college classes delve deeper into the book, enabling them to take Levison's perspectives on Spirit-inspiration even further into the grit of everyday life.

Secrets of a Soulful Marriage: Creating and Sustaining a Loving, Sacred Relationship by Jim and Ruth Sharon (SkyLight Publishing, 2014, $16.99) is a hope-filled resource for developing soulful, mature love aimed at people looking to create, maintain and glorify the sacred in their relationship.

The Spacious Heart: Room for Spiritual Awakening by Donald Clymer and Sharon Clymer Landis (Herald Press, 2014, $16.99) helps those seeking greater intimacy and connection with God—those who know there is something more than the structures of church and religion, who are ready to explore something deeper.

Principalities and Powers: Revising John Howard Yoder's Sociological theology by Jamie Pitts (The Lutterworth Press, 2014, $45) shows how Yoder's theology shows tendencies to be reductive but can be revised to be nonreductive.

What would Jesus do?

Jon Heinly is former youth minister for Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference and Lancaster Mennonite Schools. He can be reached at jheinly@gmail.com.

What would Jesus do? is a beautiful question that became a cliché during my teenage years. Many readers remember the bracelets, presumably proclaiming the Christian belief of the wearer with the simple letters WWJD. I had a couple of these but struggled with whether to wear them. I was committed to living my life in the way of Jesus but saw the bracelets as a popular trend that was not necessarily tied to the wearer's commitment to being a faithful follower of Jesus. In time, the bracelets were overtaken by the next exciting trend, and it became unusual to see them anymore. Maybe it has been long enough that the question can be reclaimed without the baggage of trendy jewelry. What would Jesus do?

God has personally come to show us and teach us what it means to be fully human.

This question is on my mind because I'm an Anabaptist studying in an ecumenical seminary. In this context, I have the opportunity to consider Anabaptist beliefs in relation to the beliefs of other Christians, and I have the privilege of articulating Anabaptist theology to people who are relatively unfamiliar with it. When given this chance, there are many things we may end up discussing, but I'm sure to include our understanding of Scripture.

As Anabaptists, we have chosen to commit ourselves to a communal reading of Scripture that centers on the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have chosen to read and interpret the whole of Scripture through the whole life of the incarnate Word of God. This is summarized well in our *Confession of Faith*: "We seek to understand and interpret Scripture in harmony with Jesus Christ as we are led by the Holy Spirit in the church" (*Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*, 1995, Article 4: Scripture).

With this backdrop, my studies have led me to an exciting discovery. I'm enrolled in a course in which we are reading early Christian writings. For most people, including me, it's easy to assume that theological treatises of the early church have little relevance to Christian life in our contemporary world. As it turns out, while some of it feels antiquated, other portions feel alive and relevant. I'm processing many concepts as a result of these readings, but there is one that I've found to be particularly relevant to the life of the church in our contemporary context: the Word of God.

Among these ancient writers, the Word of Go is frequently referenced. For contemporary Chri tians, we recognize this term from the beginning of the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and withou him not one thing came into being" (John 1:1-3). These early Christians have much to say about the activity of the Word of God at creation and throughout human history, but their fervor in re tion to the Word reaches a climax when they write about the Word becoming Flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. Specifically, they often write about the great significance of God, who is invisible, becoming visible to us in Jesus Christ.

In knowing Jesus Christ through recorded Scripture, passed down through church history, the presence of the church gathered and by the experience of the Holy Spirit, we encounter Go For these early Christians, this provides the amazing opportunity to know God's will for human beings. God has personally come among us to show us and teach us what it means to be fully human. This resonates with an Anabaptist understanding.

As a result, the question becomes relevant: What would Jesus do? As we struggle as a chur with what it means to be the church in the worl today, we can take encouragement from these early texts.

Doing biblical interpretation and thinking the logically still require a serious process of discer ment, but we can be reminded that we will do both most faithfully as we look to the example o Jesus. How did Jesus read Scripture? How did Jesus teach and disciple? How did Jesus treat th people around him? What principles did Jesus e body throughout his life and ministry? In the answers to these questions, we encounter the ver nature of God. Additionally, we receive a perfect example of God's desires for us as we live into our full humanity, both individually and collectively. What does the life of Jesus have to say to the church today? What would Jesus do? TM

Books to help us be disciples of Jesus

As followers of Jesus, we pursue discipleship, or learning. We are on a lifelong journey of learning to follow the way of Jesus.

Here are some books that can help us in that journey.

Strangers and Pilgrims Once More: Being Disciples of Jesus in a Post-Christendom World by Addison Hodges Hart (Eerdmans, 2014, $18) calls disciples of Jesus to live as "passers-by of many things around us."

In an accessible style that goes into remarkable depth, Hart calls us to say yes to Christianity and no to Christendom, yes to dogma, no to dogmatism, yes to the Bible, no to biblicism, yes to sacramental unity, no to sacramental disunity, yes to evangelism, no to polemicism.

Even more accessible is Rowan Williams' short book **Being Christian: Baptism, Bible, Eucharist, Prayer** (Eerdmans, 2014, $10). The former Archbishop of Canterbury is a savvy theologian and an excellent writer.

Based on talks he gave, this little book looks at the essential elements of the Christian life. It's filled with marvelous insights. Here are a few: "Baptism brings you into the neighborhood of other Christians." "Approach the Bible as if it were a parable of Jesus." "Holy Communion ... obliges you to see the person next to you as *wanted by God*." Prayer is "a constant movement into an endless mystery."

From a Mennonite perspective comes **The Spacious Heart: Room for Spiritual Awakening** by Donald Clymer and Sharon Clymer Landis (Herald Press, 2014, $16.99).

Clymer and Landis, his younger sister, alternate telling stories from their experience that illustrate what they call a spacious heart. Clymer writes that "a person with such a heart is one who is more laid back, more willing to experience God's presence in all aspects of life."

They address common themes in spiritual practice, such as living in the present, being grateful, humility, patience and play.

Their narrative approach is appealing, if uneven at times.

Another work by a Mennonite that also uses memoir to explore spirituality is **The Road That I Must Walk: A Disciple's Journey** by Darrin W. Snyder Belousek (Cascade Books, 2014, $23).

Belousek says the book is not *about* discipleship but "represents my own wrestling with the call and cost of discipleship across my first decade as an intentional follower of Jesus."

It is not a unified narrative, however, but a collection of essays, poetry and reflections, all related to discipleship in its various forms.

Belousek is a thoughtful, clear and honest writer who offers valuable insights from his own journey.

Presence and Encounter: The Sacramental Possibilities of Everyday Life by David G. Benner (Brazos Press, 2014, $15.99) approaches discipleship from the perspective of depth psychology.

This small, simple book is full of profound explorations of the meaning of presence. I found myself underlining sentences on every other page.

Let me quote several: "The reality of absence must be embraced if we are to experience a stable knowing of presence." "If your relationship with the here and now is dysfunctional, that dysfunction will be reflected in every relationship in your life." "Until presence becomes where we live rather than what we occasionally try to generate, our attempts to actually be present will always involve more appearance than reality."

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

FILM REVIEWS

The Good Lie (PG-13) is based on real-life events. Sudanese refugees given the chance to resettle in America arrive in Kansas City, Mo., where their encounter with employment agency counselor changes all their lives. Despite its use of Hollywood clichés, the film tells a powerful story that illustrates the importance of community.—*Gordon Houser*

Gone Girl (R) is based on the best-selling novel, which it follows closely. The story about a woman who disappears and whose husband is later charged with her murder is complex and unrealistic. While it addresses themes of marriage and fidelity and satirizes the fickleness of public opinion, the plot is outlandish. The film, however, is stylishly shot and well-acted.—*gh*

BOOK REVIEWS

Christian. Muslim. Friend.: Twelve Paths to Real Relationship by David W. Shenk (Herald Press, 2014, $14.99) presents 12 ways Christians and Muslims can form relationships that have integrity. This involves showing respect, practicing hospitality and conversing honestly, all while bearing witness to Christ. Shenk, a mission consultant, has spent many years engaging in such dialogue and has lectured in both Christian and Muslim forums.—*gh*

Mapping Exile and Return: Palestinian Dispossession and a Political Theology for a Shared Future by Alain Epp Weaver (Fortress Press, 2014, $39) challenges the way Christian Zionists talk about what land belongs to Israel. Instead he draws on knowledge of Palestinian refugee mapping practices and offers a political theology that's compatible with a vision for a shared Palestinian-Israel future. Epp Weaver has served with Mennonite Central Committee in Palestine, Jordan and Iraq and was a project coordinator in the Gaza Strip. He knows whereof he writes. Both these books are relevant to the political realities in our world today.—*gh*

(Continued from page 5)

someone whose life was touched and changed by Emma. And then there are the delightful photos.

One can order the book by calling 800-245-7894 or going online to www.Mennonmedia.org/store.—*Nancy V. Lee, Harrisonburg, Va.*

Subverting the ways of the world

T.S. Martin III's letter (September) on our Mennonite children planting tobacco raises an important issue but does not take into account what is truly at stake in Anabaptist tobacco planting and usage. I, for one, uphold the longstanding conviction of Anabaptist-Mennonites to subvert the ways of the world. In an age when global and national health agencies hypocritically condemn tobacco but have no problem with aspartame in our drinks or genetically modified corn in our cereal, it is only fitting that we refuse to baptize such puritanical and secular agendas by freely inhaling and chewing. In addition, history teaches us that pipe smoking (even pipes lit with the help of meetinghouse stoves) was not uncommon among the quiet in the land. Indeed, my own—and very Anabaptist—family name confirms this tradition.

Of course, I share Martin's opposition to the "filthy use" of tobacco. Proletarian smoking and filthy spitting can disturb many a Sunday service. But may we strive toward a clean and simple enjoyment of creation and provide our children with the countercultural opportunity to engage in profitable and barefoot outdoor activities in our vast Mennonite tobacco fields, which are, by the way, ripe for harvest.—*P. Moses Smoker, South Bend, Ind.*

Stop blaming the victims

In response to the letters in the October issue encouraging the church to once again sweep under the rug the issues caused by the immoral behavior of John Howard Yoder, "enough already" is right. Enough of blaming the victims for this problem. Let us not forget that all this was caused by the sexual violence of John Howard Yoder.

This lament and healing is for the church to own its complicity in not attending to victims' needs and excluding the women from Yoder's disciplinary process. The women aren't "continuing this"; AMBS and Mennonite Church USA leadership initiated the process.

The process now is for all of us who shied away from asking, How could a church I'm a part of allow this to happen? We all heard rumors. We all didn't demand appropriate investigation and intervention. We need to confess. And we need to commit to new ways of protecting the flock from predators within.

I also grieve for the Yoder family. I experienced some of their grief firsthand. Let us not blame the victims for the family's grief. Yoder's behavior is the cause. I would never hold the family accountable for his behavior.

I wish this mess would magically disappear. But it won't until it is properly dealt with. We must keep trying until we get it right. If we really want to help the women heal, we need to establish a fund to pay for the counseling that victims need.

We (the church) owe it to the victims and ourselves to resolve all facets of this issue.—*John G. Kaufman, Goshen, Ind., former member of the accountability and support group for John Howard Yoder and retired clinical social worker, working 45 years with victims and abusers*

Question sexuality studies

John C. Stutzman (Letters, October) said that we need to include the medical community in our debates. He summarized the APA statement in four parts. I agree that there is truth in the statement, especially in the first part. But there are good reasons to question whether every part of the statement is based on indisputable science.

We have seen how many medical and psychological opinions have changed over the years. We should ask how those studies were conducted and who did the work? Were they humble people recognizing that all of us have some bias? With whom did they consult and whose studies did they reject?

While I disagree with my fellow Evangelical Christians on some matters, especially on going to war, I call for respect for those who have studied carefully and written thoughtfully on the subject of healthy sexuality. Also, I call for us to pay attention to the testimonies of those whose lives have been changed and have left the homosexual lifestyle. The changes in their lives are real. Why are their stories not found in *The Mennonite*?

Let us not forget the verses in 1 Corinthians that teach about the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man. Also, I agree with those who say the Christian moral demand is not orientation change but chaste behavior. The call for all of us is humility, repentance, holiness and love.—*Daniel L. Sauder, Lancaster, Pa.*

Promises were made

J. Denny Weaver's letter (October) reminds us that "promises were made" a the time our confession of faith was adopted. I remember how, time and time again, we were assured from the podium at our General Conference sessions that this confession of faith was a "teaching document." It was never intended to be used for "discipline" purposes. It appears our leaders have forgotten how clearly these assurances were given 28 years ago.—*Melvin D. Schmidt, Hyattsville, Md.*

Memories of Out-Spokin'

Thanks for the great spread on Out-Spokin'. It brought back many memories from the summer of 1969, when I and some college friends went on a weeklong Out-Spokin' trip with our leader, Terry Burkhalter. I dug up the old photos and recalled how much fun we had. Out-Spokin' should be revived with bike trips for seniors.—*Gloria Miller Holub, Goshen, Ind.*

Letting our light shine

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house in the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven.
—Matthew 5:14-16 TNIV

At a time when our church seems to be shrinking and we are tempted to think our influence is fading, I invite you to reflect on an aspect of our work that is growing. In my travels across Mennonite Church USA, I meet many people who grew up in other denominations or with other expressions of faith and have joined Mennonite Church USA because of our theology and values.

I am particularly grateful for the ways we are reaching new people through the ministries of our churchwide agencies—Everence, Mennonite Education Agency, Mennonite Health Service (MHS) Alliance, Mennonite Mission Network, MennoMedia, as well as The Mennonite, Inc., a churchwide entity. Most of these agencies have at least one thing in common—they minister to an increasingly diverse constituency, including many people who do not call themselves Mennonites.

In their early years, most of these boards worked primarily with members of Mennonite Church USA, whether as staff, board members or constituents. In recent years, these agencies have spread their wings across new territory. In its September meeting, the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA complimented these ministries for reaching constituencies that have interest in Anabaptist values but who do not belong to the Mennonite church. They are reaching out to many "naked Anabaptists" (to use Stuart Murray's term) both at home and abroad. Some call themselves hyphenated Anabaptists, people with primary loyalty to another denomination but with strong Anabaptist leanings. For example, people may identify as Presbyterian-Anabaptists who favor their own church polity but look to Mennonites for their peace theology.

It is both exciting and sobering to reflect on the way others are looking to us for guidance on how to follow Jesus in the world. Think, for example, of Willow Creek Community Church's recent interest in peacemaking. After reading one of John Paul Lederach's books on reconciliation, pastor Bill Hybels referred to it in a sermon. He told the congregation that he has been remiss in teaching about peace, a vital element in the gospel. His interest piqued MennoMedia's resolve to update and reprint Lederach's book, which was written more than a decade ago. They gave it with a new name, *Reconcile*, and Bill Hybels recommended it to tens of thousands of people in a recent broadcast to his leadership network. The result? The book sold several thousand copies in a few weeks.

The Executive Board encouraged MennoMedia to think of creative new ways to make their products available to a larger constituency that is thirsty for Anabaptist values. The board commended them for the excellent launch of the new curriculum called *Shine!*, which outstripped their sales expectations, and earned the commendations of people from other denominations. Perhaps this is a literal fulfillment of Jesus' metaphorical command to let our light shine. The Executive Board encouraged MennoMedia to continue partnering with other denominations and individual Christians who have interest in an Anabaptist frame of reference.

Everence also partners with other historic peace churches, such as the Quakers, who desire ministries with meaningful integration of one's faith and finances. And MHS Alliance has been asked to work with congregations in China that are building church-related institutions for health ministry. They found MHS alliance a helpful model of connecting the theology of the church with practical ministry in the community.

I pray that the light of our lives and ministries may reflect the glory of God in ever brighter and deeper hues so that God's healing and hope may flow unhindered through us to the world. TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

It is both exciting and sobering to reflect on the way others are looking to us for guidance on how to follow Jesus in the world.

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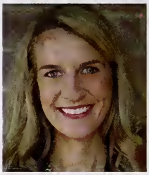

Anna Groff

We are pleased to announce that our redesigned website launched last month. Prior to the launch, the board and staff of The Mennonite, Inc., witnessed several major changes in the consumption of news—including church news. Our new site design addresses these changes and offers flexibility when further shifts occur.

Need for immediacy: First, readers of all ages share a need for immediacy. We at *The Mennonite* no longer think in terms of monthly magazine issues or editions, as we know that our readers expect news and information immediately online. This requires a web presence that provides both daily news and convenient ways to research past issues. Our new site provides both.

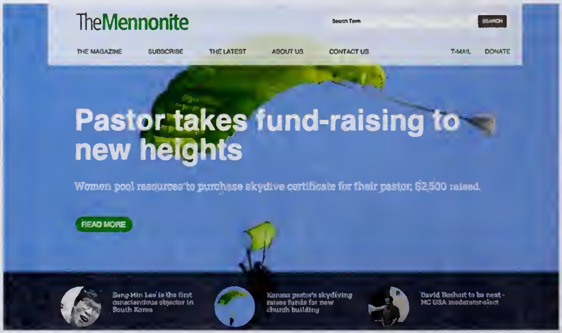
Information overload: In addition to promotional emails and marketing ploys, our readers already receive a lot of free church-related news online and in print. We all face challenges prioritizing the information we receive in our inboxes.

One of our responsibilities as editors at *The Mennonite* is to aid in that sorting process. Instead of injudiciously posting every news item we receive from Mennonite-related sources, we carefully select and edit the material and utilize the new homepage design to highlight the latest stories. We also provide original news coverage of Mennonite Church USA events that are not ava able elsewhere.

Flexibility: Readers also look for ways to engage with content via social media, as well as a riety of ways to consume it. During a workshop an Associated Church Press convention, I learn that more people read email on their smartphor than on their desktop computer. This applies to many readers of *TMail* (our free weekly ezine). Our new site is mobile responsive, meaning tha it is easy to read and navigate even on the smal est of handheld devices.

New structure: Finally, as Ervin Stutzman says in his column on page 55, Mennonite Chur USA's denominational structure may change in the coming years. However, many of the church agencies are already ministering to an increasingly diverse constituency, including many peop who do not call themselves Mennonites, he writes. Structural changes offer an opportunity *The Mennonite* to broaden its audience. Fortunately, our new site will be an easy place to imp ment such a shift, if we choose to go that direction.

If you are not already reading this on our wel site, please check out www.themennonite.org. You'll find web-exclusive pieces, a diverse crew new bloggers, easy-to-view PDFs and more. We invite you not only to bookmark the website bu to engage the content and consider ways you might contribute to The Mennonite, Inc., as a photographer, writer or blogger.—*ag*


TheMennonite

Pastor takes fund-raising to new heights

Women pool resources to purchase skydive certificate for their pastor; $2,500 raised.

Sang-Min Lee is the first conscientious objector in South Korea

Korean pastor's skydiving raises funds for new church building

David Boshart to be next MC USA moderator-elect

Bloggers at www.themennonite.org:

Rafael Barahona
Malinda Berry
Glen Guyton
Drew Hart
Erica Littlewolf
Tim Nafziger (continuing)
Byron Pellecer
Jessica Schrock Ringenberg
Matthew Yoder

TheMennonite

Waiting in the messy middle

December 2014

www.TheMennonite.org

INSIDE:

- Dare to be a Daniel
- Drought among the Maasai
- It matters how we disagree
- Mennonites in the news
- A baby for today

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Mennonite Church USA

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This publication welcomes your letters, either about our content or about issues facing the Mennonite Church USA. Please keep your letter brief—one or two paragraphs—and about one subject only. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. Publication is also subject to space limitations. Email to letters@themennonite.org or mail to Letters, *The Mennonite,* 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517. Please include your name and address. We will not print letters sent anonymously, though we may withhold names at our discretion.—*Editors*

Holy Spirit at work

In Acts 15 is the story of the Jerusalem Conference on the requirements for Gentiles who decided to become followers of Jesus the Christ. Were they required to be circumcised as the Old Testament demanded? The conclusions are well known. The message from the apostles in verses 28 and 29 is: "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and what has been strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well." Circumcision is not even mentioned. The evidence of the work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the lives of the Gentiles was the basis of their acceptance by the Apostles.

Is it possible the Spirit is leading us on a parallel path today? Should the evidence of the work of Jesus and the Holy Spirit in the lives and ministries of LGBT individuals lead us to accept them fully as our sisters and brothers?—*Ken Long, New Holland, Pa.*

What about MCC and MDS?

In Ervin Stutzman's column (Mennonite Church USA, November), "Letting our Light Shine," he mentions a number of "ministries of our churchwide agencies." Conspicuous by their absence in this listing are Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Disaster Service. Having served in both agencies—two years under MCC in Europe after the war and many of the earlier disasters, large and small, with MDS—it is my considered opinio that these two agencies are two of the most effective ministries of the churc In addition, in terms of diversity, not only do these two agencies serve man diverse clients, but many diverse people work under their umbrella. It is a shame they were not mentioned in thi article.—*Art Smucker, Goshen, Ind.*

Response from Ervin Stutzman:
While MCC and MDS are highly value partners in ministry, they are not churc wide agencies of Mennonite Church USA. Rather they are inter-Mennonite agencies with staff and board representa tion from various "denominations" of Mennonites beyond Mennonite Church USA.

New website

I like the new website with the storie columnists and blogger choices. Great job on the clean appearance and kudos to your webmaster.—*Beth Landis, Eagle, Idaho*

Military parallel

I imagine that most Mennonite churches see themselves as inviting and welcoming congregations. For example, if someone in full military uniform visited one of our churches, we would give them a warm welcome an encourage them to return the next week. If they continued to attend, mo of us would hope that eventually they would hear the biblical message of peace and nonresistance. That should certainly open up healthy conversations about the teachings of Jesus and the Bible, and hopefully the new attendee would begin to understand the theology and experience personal renewal leading them to cut ties with th military. Then we would be excited to invite them into baptism and member ship at that point.

However, if the new guest promote the military and attempted to gain lea ership in the congregation, we would need to explain the biblical reasons they could not continue encouraging members to support or join the military. And I don't think any Mennonite congregation would invite an active member of the military to become their pastor. We would draw the line and ask them not to promote such ideas among us while we would still welcome their attendance.

That is the exact parallel I see with the issue of homosexuality in the Mennonite church. We are inviting and welcoming but do not accept the unscriptural view of full participation for practicing LGBT individuals any more than active military personnel. I can't see any difference, so why is this such an issue? If, as we claim, we have a high view of Scripture and are countercultural, then we should be consistent by treating the issues of the military and homosexuality the same.—*Nelson Shenk, Bally, Pa.*

The legacy of J.D. Graber

As missions secretary of the "Old" Mennonite Church, J.D. Graber made his rounds preaching at churches across the church.

You didn't have to listen to him long before you caught his passion. "A mission outpost for every congregation." J.D. came back to this vision often during the '40s and '50s, and it caught on across the denomination. Many new church plants were started because of J.D.'s passion, not only in Franconia Conference where I grew up but in many other states as well.

J.D. and his wife, Minnie, were missionaries in India many years prior to his mission assignment here.

It would be fascinating to hear stories of hundreds of congregations that were started in those two decades as a direct result of J.D.'s vision of "a mission outpost for every congregation."

I visited one such congregation, started in a storefront, Finland Mission. Pastor John Ehst was leading a new believers' class. At different times throughout the year several groups would be instructed prior to baptism.

It's no wonder the church had to begin two services every Sunday. Plus they had to expand their facilities to accommodate their growing congregation of over 250, most of whom have no Mennonite connections. I cannot explain this growth except for the Holy Spirit and their enthusiasm.

This movement of the Spirit could be studied with profit to see what lessons we can learn at a time the Mennonite Church USA is declining in numbers.

God is bringing people to our doorsteps. We can tolerate them, as many Americans are apt to do, or we can make them our friends. In Harrisonburg schools, I've heard that immigrant students represent about 40 countries. Maybe our future calls us to be more focused on our new immigrants, that they hopefully be impressed by Christ's love in us.

Should not all members of a congregation be active in inviting neighbors and friends to join us in worship? And when guests do visit, are they warmly received? Do we practice hospitality, which the Apostle Paul frequently encourages in his letters?

The nagging question I am left with is this—Are we as a denomination motivated by what the apostles were motivated by, after hearing Jesus give them his final commission? Only after the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost were the disciples equipped to put into effect Jesus' great master plan for the church. The truth and the excitement is that the Holy Spirit still equips and empowers us today for that same unique task.—*Eugene K. Souder, Harrisonburg, Va.*

(Continued on page 54)

IN THIS ISSUE

This issue focuses on Jesus' birth and the hope that this infant child brings us—still today.

Hannah Heinzekehr, director of communications and marketing for Mennonite Church USA, shares about her experience of waiting for her unborn child as well as the pain of childbirth. She relates this to what we learn about waiting for Jesus during the Advent season and when pain in our lives and in the church can bring about something new.

"Sometimes pain and events that reorient our lives can also make space for God to give birth to something new in our midst and give us a radically different glimpse of the Divine," she writes on page 14.

My editorial on page 56 also addresses birth and Jesus' infancy, as I reflect on what babies can teach us.

Furthermore, Isaac Villegas' column on page 8 addresses the magis' visit to Jesus. They were actually "enemies of the prophets and priests of God" and yet the first to meet Jesus, according to the Gospel of Matthew.

"Our differences render us strange to one another, as strange as the magi seemed to Mary and Joseph, as strange as Jesus seemed to the magi, who expected to find a palace, not a shack, a royal prince, not a peasant child," Villegas writes on page 8.

We hope the pages of this issue help you consider the differences and varying experiences among us regarding LGBT inclusion. Anna Kathryn Shenk Eby and Anita Hooley Yoder are among the writers who share about their personal transformation on the issue.

While reading and then responding either in writing or in speech to the various viewpoints, keep in mind the directions from Sarah Ann Bixler on pages 44-46, in which she outlines how to do nonviolent communication in a peace church.—*Editor*

EMM sends first U.S.-based YES team in 10 years

BALTIMORE, Md.—This fall, Eastern Mennonite Missions sent its first U.S.-based YES team in 10 years. The team, made up of four young adults between the ages of 18 and 21, is partnering in mission with Wilkens Avenue Mennonite Church in inner-city Baltimore.

After two weeks of training, the team began service in Baltimore at the end of September. The team, made up of Esther Choi, Evan Courtney, Brianna Maust and team leader Maria Nissley, is tutoring students and helping teachers at Mt. Clare Christian School three days a week and teaching English to immigrants at a local church building. Team members are also meeting neighbors, getting to know them, and praying with them.—*EMM*

Marcus Smucker, pastor, teacher spiritual director, dies at 82

TUCSON, Ariz.—Marcus Smucker, pastor, teacher, spiritual director, died on Oct. 29 at Lancaster (Pa.) General Hospital at age 82. Smucker was living at Landis Communities in Lititz, Pa., since his retirement.

"His passing took place peacefully with his family members gathered around him," according to Todd Friesen, pastor of East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church in Lancaster. A celebration of life service was held Nov. 1 at Mellinger Mennonite Church in Lancaster.

Smucker's leadership touched people in Lancaster, Pa.; Elkhart, Ind.; and Portland, Ore. Smucker was featured in a cover story in the May issue of *The Mennonite* by Sue Conrad Howes.
—*The Mennonite*

Tina Block Ediger, author of mission book, dies

HAMPTON, Va.—As the 100th anniversary of the General Conference Mennonite Church Commission on Overseas Mission (COM) approached, Tina Block Ediger, "the face" of the agency to churches in the United States and Canada, was the obvious person to produce a book to mark the occasion. That book, *Window to the World: Extraordinary Stories from a Century of Overseas Mission 1900-2000*, is now a lasting testament of Ediger's significant contribution to God's mission in the world.

Born April 25, 1931, near Steinbach, Manitoba, Ediger worked for COM, predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network, in Newton, Kan., from 1955 to 1981. She organized furlough visits for many missionaries returning to Canada and the United States. While working full-time, she also completed a bachelor's degree in English at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan. Because of her loving personality and concern for people, she was known as "Aunt Tina" by many missionary children. Ediger traveled to 38 countries and often gave speeches in addition to writing, which included research on female mission workers.

For two years, Ediger served as the secretary-bookkeeper at Union Biblica Seminary in Yeotmal, India.

Block Ediger died Oct. 16 at the age of 82. Memorial services were held Oct. 25 at Bethel College Mennonite Church in North Newton, where she attended.—*Mennonite Mission Networ*

Goshen College photo

Goshen students hold hymn marathon fund-raiser

Goshen (Ind.) College students (seen here from a Sept. 15 hymn sing) sang all 658 songs in *Hymnal: A Worship Book* from Nov. 14-16 in order to raise money for Christian Peacemaker Teams, an international peacemaking agency. A hymn marathon fund-raiser began on Nov. 14 at 7 p.m. and went nonstop through late afternoon on Nov. 16, in the Goshen College Newcomer Center.—*Goshen College*

Survivor of ISIS massacre tells story to CPT

IRAQI KURDISTAN—Aswad (name changed for the reasons of security of his family members held by ISIS), a man in his 40s, told members of Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) last month about his escape from ISIS, which invaded Aswad's village Kocho on Aug. 10.

The militants insisted that all the Ezidis (Yazidis) in the village convert t Islam or die. When they refused, ISIS gathered around 1,000 people in the school. They took villagers' phones, money, and jewelry. Then ISIS took th men and drove them in three trucks several hundred meters from the main road. There they knocked them to the ground and shot them with machine guns, then shot them each in the head to make sure they were dead.

When it was Aswad's turn, the executioner heard planes approaching and ran away, leaving Aswad in agony, with four bullets in his pelvis and legs. The rest of the men died on the spot, except three who ran away wounded, and who, as Aswad learned, ISIS later found and killed.

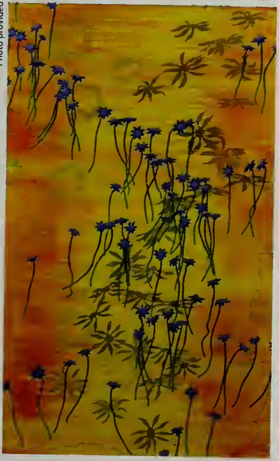
Aswad believes his inability to walk or run saved his life. After about five hours, crawling in pain, hunger and thirst, he reached the nearest village (around two kilometers away). Fearing ISIS's revenge, the villagers threw Aswad out of the village on a blanket and abandoned him. However, in the darkness of the night, a teenager from the village came to him, brought him water and let Aswad borrow his phone. Aswad called his friend who, with much fear and hesitation, came to help him. His friend kept hiding him, as he lay delirious with a high fever, in poultry farms and in an abandoned house.

"Finally," Aswad recalled, "my friend took me to hospital in Mosul, where I was randomly put in the ward with some 40 ISIS militants. I had to pretend that I was one of them."

While in the hospital, an air strike hit the building. Aswad's friend took him to Syria to have another operation. There the doctors took out three of four bullets, and after three hours they came back to Iraq.

Finally, after what felt like a lifetime for him, he was in Kurdistan. His cousin picked him up from the checkpoint and took him to Baadre, where CPT members met him.—*CPT*

Photo provided



Art auction at EMU

Winslow McCagg's "Burma" is one of the featured pieces to be auctioned during the three-week fund-raiser for Eastern Mennonite University's visual and communication arts department. Photos of artwork with artist biographies is available online at emuartauction2014.wordpress.com.—*EMU*

Simulation exercise at Hesston explores Native American experiences

HESSTON, Kan.—Hesston College on Nov. 10 hosted a simulation exercise called "The Loss of Turtle Island." About 65 people attended.

Erica Littlewolf, coordinator of Mennonite Central Committee's Central States Indigenous Vision Center, led the exercise, which interactively explores the historic relationship between Europeans—specifically Mennonites in the Central States region—and the indigenous nations that inhabit what is now the United States.

Since its formation two years ago, the Indigenous Vision Center has focused on building relationships with and among indigenous people to address systematic injustices.

Littlewolf is from the Northern Cheyenne tribe of southeastern Montana and lives in Albuquerque, N.M. She is a member of White River Cheyenne Mennonite Church in Busby, Mont. She serves on Mennonite Church USA's Women in Leadership Steering Committee, Peace and Justice Support Network and Roots of Justice Accountability Circle.—*Hesston College*

Workers in Algeria hold 10th reunion

STURGIS, Mich.—Most of the 40-plus people traveling to Amigo Center in Sturgis for an Algeria reunion Oct. 14-16 hadn't been in Algeria for more than 45 years, but they came from as far as British Columbia, California and northern Alberta.

This was the 10th Algeria reunion since the last Mennonite had left Algeria in 1978. (Mennonites had worked in Algeria from 1954 to 1978, sent first via Mennonite Relief and Service Committee and later through Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Board of Missions.) Others attending the reunion came from Kansas, Iowa, Manitoba, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Indiana.

Participants got acquainted and reacquainted, since not all who attended were there at the same time. Among other activities, they studied about Islam and the Koran and watched the French-produced film *Of Gods and Men*, the true story of the martyrdom of Trappist Monks in Algeria during a time of civil war there in the 1990s. —*Marian E. Hostetler*

Credit Union observes Veterans Day with service to community

HARRISONBURG, Va.—Park View Federal Credit Union lived out its heritage of "Neighbors Serving Neighbors" by observing Veteran's Day in active service to the community. PVFCU has roots in the Anabaptist community, which has a long heritage of serving others in the name of Christ. To show their appreciation to many who have served the community, country and world, they hosted a Community Connection service day on Nov. 11.

PVFCU employees, along with employees from some member businesses served a total of 325 hours in the Harrisonburg community.—*Park View Federal Credit Union*

Christmas with strangers

Isaac Villegas pastor of Chapel Hill (N.C.) Mennonite Fellowship and serves on the Executive Board of Mennonite Church USA.

The magi see signs in the night sky, celestial revelations announcing that the long-awaited Jewish king has been born. After traveling for months across the desert, the astrologers from the East finally arrive in Bethlehem, at the birthplace of Jesus, where they find the promised child whom they pay homage with lavish gifts.

In the Gospel of Matthew, after Jesus is born, the magi are the earliest visitors, not the shepherds we hear about in Luke's Gospel. For Matthew, the foreigners arrive first, the travelers from pagan lands enter Jesus' story first.

To call them "wise men" misses the scandal of who they really are. They aren't kings or elders or sages. They are astrologers, sorcerers, fortune-tellers, priests who consort with the gods of Babylonia, Arabia, Persia, perhaps members of Zoroastrian priesthoods, magicians—our word "magician" comes from the biblical name "magi."

People called magi show up in the book of Daniel. They are the religious servants of Babylon, of king Nebuchadnezzar. Magi are enemies of Israel, enemies of the prophets and priests of God, despised foreigners. Yet they are among the first to find Jesus.

At the beginning of the story of Jesus, we read that outsiders and strangers, unacceptable people, practitioners of a questionable religion, foreigners with an offensive history, with a genealogy that ties them to the enemies of God—the people who shouldn't belong—end up part of Jesus' story. They see God in the flesh.

And not just see but worship. "We have come to worship him," the magi announce. When they enter the house of Mary and Joseph, when they find themselves in the presence of the Messiah, they kneel down and worship.

To worship, "proskuneo" in Greek, means to bow down or lie down and kiss someone's feet—a gesture of humility and reverence, of submission and yieldedness. We worship with our bodies, with our lives, with all we are. And we learn the movements of worship from the magi in Matthew's Christmas story.

I've been reading the Rule of Saint Benedict, a book from the sixth century still in use today as a guide for the sisters and brothers who live in Benedictine communities. The book instructs members of the community into a full-bodied welcome when strangers show up, a worshipful gesture of reverence, of yieldedness. "Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ, for he is goin to say, 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me,' " Benedict of Nursia urged. "Let the head be bowe or the whole body prostrated on the ground in adoration of Christ, who indeed is received in their persons." Just as the magi knelt before the Christ child, Benedict's monks bowed at the feet of strangers, lying prostrate in adoration. Becaus the visitor is Christ.

Because the foreigner is Jesus. "I was a stranger," Benedict quoted Jesus' words from Matthew's Gospel, "and you welcomed me."

Our differences render us strange to one another, as strange as the magi seemed to Mary and Joseph.

Worship invites us into a posture of reverence before one another, because Jesus lives among us, in us. We are patient with each other, because I am learning to se Christ in you, and you are waiting to see Christ in me even when we are entangle in a quarrel, as we are now, in our church, in our denom ination. Our differences render us strange to one another, as strange as the magi seemed to Mary and Joseph, as strange as Jesus seemed to the magi, who expected to find a palace, not a shack, royal prince, not a peasant child. Yet there, with Jesus, there's room for bewildered strangers. With Jesus there's room for incomprehensible di ferences.

We have a motley denomination. I know, because I've read your letters and emails, I've listened to your pastors and conference ministers, I've read surveys and reports, I've worshiped in our congregations across the country—from Hubbard, Ore., to Harlem, N.Y., from Lancaster, Pa., t Buras, La. I didn't grow up in your churches, but I've come to believe that my faith is bound up with yours, despite our racial and cultural and liturgical and theological differences. I've learned to sing a verse from a hymn that you've taught me, a song I hope we can still sing together: "Ma we all so love each other and all selfish claims deny, so that each one for the other will not hesitate to die." TM

MWC churches and the gospel of peace

I'm glad to see that the church in the global south is growing," a person commented at a talk I gave on Mennonite World Conference. "But what do we know about what they actually believe? Are they pacifists? Are they COs?"

There were many things about the question that I wanted to reframe. After all, the 103 groups that comprise Mennonite World Conference (MWC) cannot be addressed as "they"—our brothers and sisters around the world are as diverse as the Mennonite groups in North America. Moreover, the shorthand terms we often use to describe our convictions regarding the gospel of peace—words like "pacifism" and "conscientious objectors"—may not make much sense to Christians living in different political contexts and cultures. And the question seemed to establish Mennonite Church USA as the gold standard for evaluating the theological qualifications of the other 102 member churches, precisely at a moment when some of those groups are raising doubts about our own theological orthodoxy.

But despite all these reservations, I understand the concern behind the question.

The North American Mennonite mission movement in the first half of the 20th century tended to present the gospel in fairly standard Protestant terms. In the cross-cultural and ecumenical setting of the mission field, a focus on "nonresistance" or "love of enemy" seemed to needlessly complicate the straightforward message of Christ's saving work on the cross. Thus, the churches that emerged from those mission efforts might have inherited the name Mennonite, but how does their understanding of faith and practice today connect with the distinctive theological emphases of the larger Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition, particularly regarding peace?

The answer is actually positive. In 2012, the MWC Peace Commission conducted a "peace audit" of its member churches. Virtually all the respondents expressed a clear desire to identify themselves as a "peace church," and many listed significant ways they were working to strengthen that identity. Respondents also expressed concerns, frequently noting, for example, that a gap existed between the official statements of their church and the everyday practice of congregations and individuals. And they all recognized the need for more resources and training in their commitment to being a peace church.

Yet the overall legacy of Mennonite missions—seen in the larger context of the work of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and MWC—has been overwhelmingly positive. During the second half of the 20th century, a new model of missions emerged within the Mennonite Board of Missions of the (Old) Mennonite Church that focused less on proselytizing and more on "accompaniment" and "mutuality." That approach began with a high regard for indigenous culture and was attentive to physical and social as well as spiritual needs. It tended to define the gospel in the language of reconciliation—with God, others and Creation—and it cultivated a posture of humility and respect.

For nearly a century, MCC has also promoted a holistic vision of peacemaking: extending material aid to people in need, regardless of their political, ethnic or religious affiliation, providing financial support to dozens of local peace-minded organizations. And peace theology has been at the heart of MWC's identity from its beginnings in 1925.

Today, the Anabaptist-Mennonite peace witness is finding a voice throughout our global fellowship in many settings and expressions. Much more could be said, for example, regarding the educational programs focused on reconciliation and trauma healing in India, Paraguay and Guatemala; or the creative initiatives in Ethiopia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Nigeria to promote peace in contexts of inter-religious conflict; or the efforts in Colombia to nurture peaceful forms of resistance to militarization and violence; or the emergence of alternative service programs in the face of military conscription in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Nicaragua and Uruguay; or the peaceful witness of a well-ordered life in community offered by many colony Mennonites in Mexico, Belize, Paraguay and Bolivia.

The conclusion of the MWC Peace Commission audit summarizes well the current reality of the global Anabaptist-Mennonite peace witness—and the challenge for North American Mennonites as well. "The good news is that a consciousness of being a Peace Church is embedded in the identity of MWC-member churches that responded." The ongoing challenge, the report continued, "is the pervasive complexity in moving from what is desired and written on paper, to becoming a bedrock part of the Christian life and community."

In what ways is your church bearing witness to the gospel of peace?

John D. Roth is professor of history at Goshen (Ind.) College, director of the Institute for the Study of Global Anabaptism and editor of *Mennonite Quarterly Review.*

In what ways is your church bearing witness to the gospel of peace?

Health-care disaster in Mississippi

Access to affordable health care in the United States has been a major problem for years. Perhaps nowhere has it been worse than in Mississippi. And the Affordable Care Act (ACA), often referred to as Obamacare, has not made health care more accessible or affordable in Mississippi, according to two journalists there.

Writing for *Columbia Journalism Review*, Trudy Lieberman praises Sarah Varney, a senior correspondent for Kaiser Health News, and Jeffrey Hess of Mississippi Public Broadcasting, who contributed research and reporting, for a "Letter from Mississippi," which thoroughly and poignantly details "how the poorest, sickest state got left behind by Obamacare."

Their account, published in the November/December issue of *Politico Magazine* and on the Kaiser Health News website, analyzed "Obamacare's year-long struggle for respectability and viability in the poorest state in the union," writes Lieberman.

They asked the following question: Can a private system of health insurance and subsidies for buying coverage work in a state with very poor people who have high rates of disease, lack education, and for whom buying insurance is like learning Turkish? "Add to that an uncooperative political infrastructure," writes Lieberman, "and the answer at this point seems to be no."

Given that Mississippi suffers from a high incidence of diabetes, heart disease, obesity and the highest mortality rate in the nation, Obamacare barely registered there. In fact, according to one analysis Varney cites, "Mississippi would be the only state in the union where the percentage of uninsured residents has gone up, not down."

Varney blames many factors on this failure, including "political infighting, an overwhelmed federal agency and a surprise decision from the Supreme Court." Only about 20 percent of the state's residents eligible for Obamacare coverage have signed up. The "most significant drag on sign-ups," Varney writes, "was Mississippi's decision not to expand Medicaid," which left some 138,000 low-income residents, most of whom are black, without insurance options.

Varney also points out inequalities that are part of the ACA, such as high deductibles and other high cost-sharing requirements. A 54-year old waitress got a policy for $129, Varney writes, only to discover she first had to pay $6,350 out of pocket. She cancelled the policy.

These articles focus on Mississippi, which also has the highest rate of leg amputations in the country (for African Americans, this number is particularly "startling," Varney writes) and a high rate of breast cancer deaths despite a low incidence rate. However, many of the problems with health care apply as well to many other states.

Lieberman makes the point that this story is not being told many places. She writes: "Several of the issues Varney details—like inequality, the loss of federal funds for safety-net hospitals, and the continuing political hostility to health insurance for the uninsured—are not unique to Mississippi and merit attention from reporters around the country."

In my own state of Kansas, for example, where Medicaid is not being expanded, health care is not being addressed adequately.

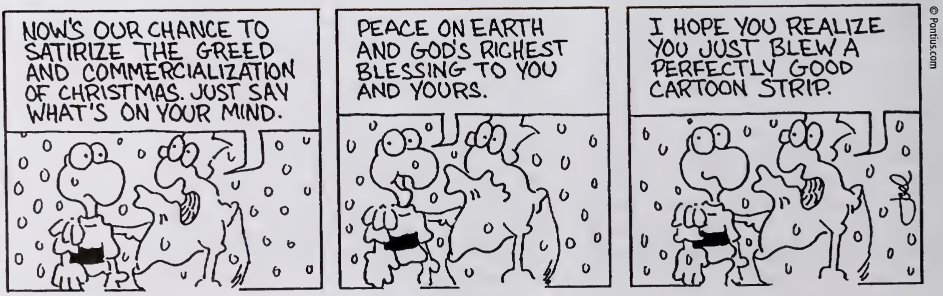
While politicians play political football with Obamacare, health-care costs continue to rise.

One culprit (of many), according to an article in *Pacific Standard* (July/August) notes the overuse of CT scans, often done before doing a simple physical exam. When one patient whose problem was already identified objected to having a scan done because of the exorbitant cost, the doctor said, "Why do you care? Your insurance will cover it."

The trouble is, too many of us don't care. And those making the decisions seem to care even less about these costs.—*Gordon Houser*

Pontius' Puddle

Joel Kauffmann


NOW'S OUR CHANCE TO SATIRIZE THE GREED AND COMMERCIALIZATION OF CHRISTMAS. JUST SAY WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND.
PEACE ON EARTH AND GOD'S RICHEST BLESSING TO YOU AND YOURS.
I HOPE YOU REALIZE YOU JUST BLEW A PERFECTLY GOOD CARTOON STRIP.
© Pontius.com

> “A person needs just $3,650—including the value of equity in their home—to be among the wealthiest half of world citizens.” —Jonathan Turley

Big government, happy citizens

Although many people say they’d be happier if government stayed out of their lives, new research suggests otherwise. Using data from surveys conducted in numerous nations between 1981 and 2007, a team led by Baylor University political scientist Patrick Flavin focused on the question: All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life these days? Respondents answered on a 10-point scale. Their ratings were then juxtaposed with four key indicators of government involvement in the economy, including generosity of welfare benefits and the extent to which labor markets are regulated. “Our results,” say the researchers, “firmly and robustly point to one conclusion: At least in the advanced industrial democracies in question, government intervention increases the likelihood that citizens find their lives to be satisfying.” Their data suggest that the impact of activist government on personal happiness is “quite substantial,” and benefits the rich and poor alike.—*Pacific Standard*

46 million,
or one in seven Americans, rely on food pantries and meal service programs to feed themselves and their families.
—*Religion News Service*

3
countries don’t use the metric system: Liberia, Myanmar and the United States.—*Vox*

Christian business?

The chain store Hobby Lobby has been backed by the Christian right for touting itself as a company run by Christian principles and for fighting the contraception mandate of the Affordable Care Act. Jonathan Merritt, columnist for Religion News Service, wonders about its Christian identity, given that much of its merchandise comes from China, which is known for its “nightmarish labor conditions, inadequate workplace regulation and rampant child labor” and where family-planning policies lead to 13 million abortions every year.—*Christian Century*

7 steps to busting stress

Step 1: Become an optimist
Step 2: Become aware of self-talk
Step 3: Ask better questions
Step 4: Employ positive affirmations
Step 5: Set positive goals
Step 6: Practice positive visualizations
Step 7: Laugh long and often
—*Spirituality & Health*

7,000
Churches close down each year in the United States.
—*Christian Century*

Muslim scholars tell Islamic State: You don’t understand Islam

More than 120 Muslim scholars from around the world joined an open letter to the “fighters and followers” of the Islamic State, denouncing them as un-Islamic by using the most Islamic of terms. Relying heavily on the Quran, the 18-page letter released Sept. 24 picks apart the extremist ideology of the militants who have left a wake of brutal death and destruction in their bid to establish a transnational Islamic state in Iraq and Syria.
—*Religion News Service*

Numbers to ponder

- Average number of hours per week U.S. public-school teachers are required to work to receive base pay: **38**
- Average number they actually work: **52**
- Percentage of black public high school students who say they carry a weapon: **14**
- Of white public high school students: **17**
- Chance that a poor woman in a predominantly white Milwaukee neighborhood will be evicted this year: **1 in 150**
- That a poor woman in a predominantly black Milwaukee neighborhood will be: **1 in 17**
- Chance that a U.S. Google employee is black: **1 in 50**
- Year in which the World Health Organization began keeping records on global obesity: **1980**
- Number of years since then in which at least one country has reduced its obesity rate: **0**
- Amount that a couple in Sarasota, Fla., earning $62,040 will receive in federal health care subsidies under the ACA: **$8,736**
- Amount a couple earning $62,041 will receive: **$0**
- Portion of U.S. electrical-power supply that comes from coal: **2/5**
- Average per capita income within three miles of a major U.S. coal plant: **$18,400**
- Number of tank cars of crude oil transported by U.S. railways in 2008: **9,500**
- In 2013: **400,000**
- Number of states that have reduced their carbon emissions by at least 30 percent since 2005: **10**
- Number that have seen a concurrent decline in economic activity: **0**

—*Harper’s*

Waiting in the messy middle

Giving birth to something new requires patience for what God will bring.

by Hannah Heinzekehr

Whenever my husband and I thought about the possibility of having a baby—whether i was dreaming about our first child or when we considered the somehow more daunting possibility of adding another baby to our family—I noticed that a strange phenomenon began to occur. I saw pregnant people everywhere.

I'm sure they had been there all along, but for some reason the idea that I might soon be one of them meant that I noticed these women more often. I saw them at the grocery store, walking around town, picking up a latte at Starbucks. The list could go on. And this is a phenomenon that lasts throughout all of pregnancy.

As I write this, I'm 35 weeks pregnant, and the baby boy growing in my womb is having a heyday. In fact, he was so active this morning that he woke me up long before my alarm went off. By this point in the pregnancy, I feel tired. I also feel large and unwieldy. Navigating tight spaces can become precarious, and I've lost count of the number of times I've apologized to someone for accidentally "belly bumping" them because I failed to leave enough space to skirt around them.

By this point in time, we've been waiting for seven-and-a-half months to meet this baby, and if all goes well, we'll probably be waiting another month still. Whether we like it or not, there's no way to expedite or automate this long, careful growth process. Being pregnant and preparing to give birth to a baby is all about patience.

And just as I've been more prone than usual to notice pregnant people around me in my day-to-day life, I've also been keenly aware of the many places in Scripture where the story of a pregnant woman or labor pains or images of new life show up. When I was expecting my daughter (now a highly energetic 2-year-old), the last sermon I heard prior to going into labor was a meditation on Revelation 12 and the significance of the pregnant woman in this chapter.

"A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth. … And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne; and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God" (Revelation 12:1-2; 5-6a).

There are many different interpretations of this text. Some see the woman as a symbol for Mary, who is here giving birth to Christ, part of John's apocalyptic retelling of the gospel. Others see her as representative of the church, giving birth to the saints who will bear out Christ's witness even in the face of Satan (the dragon). Others with a dispensationalist bent see the woman as representing the chosen people of Israel who have been guaranteed a place in heaven.

The pastor I heard reflect on this passage—at the La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren—did not focus her reflections on the identity of this apocalyptic woman but on the work she was doing in giving birth to new life in the midst of death and chaos. And this metaphor of labor pains as connected to the coming (or sometimes second coming) of Christ is a trope that occurs several times throughout the Bible.

Birth pangs or labor pains are used as a metaphor for the painful beginnings of something new and the inbreaking of Christ. Matthew 24:7-8 says, "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places: all this is but the beginning of the birth pangs." And in John 16, where Jesus is talking with his disciples and foreshadowing his death and resurrection to come, he says, "Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." And lest we forget, the story we commemorate during Advent is one of a real birth, and the main protagonist in the story is Mary, a pregnant young woman.

We're part of a culture in the United States that doesn't have much patience for the 'messy middle' or a long, drawn-out birth story.

Just as we may be tempted to focus solely on what happens after birth rather than the process that precedes it, at Advent we may want to skip ahead to the celebration of Jesus' coming.

We're part of a culture in the United States that doesn't have much patience for the "messy middle" or a long, drawn-out birth story. We are used to instant gratification, and our stores and media hop right from Halloween to Christmas, from one lucrative holiday to the next, without much thought. We've normalized inductions and other procedures that seek to shorten and keep labor as pain-free as possible. ▶

During Advent we so often seem to want to skip over the focus on waiting and watching so that we can get to Christmas and the birth.

One of my pet peeves is that during Advent we so often seem to want to skip over the focus on waiting and watching so that we can get to Christmas and the birth. We sometimes don't like to dwell with the questions the unknown holds. We'd rather sing familiar Christmas songs than deal with the minor chords and mysterious lyrics of Advent songs.

But I'm a firm believer that if we skip over this mysterious waiting time, we're shortchanging ourselves. Just as each week the child in my womb stays put and grows is beneficial to his development, so is the time we spend waiting, watching and dwelling with our questions as we prepare to think about what it means to meet Jesus again each Advent. It may feel chaotic. We may long to have our questions wrapped up and our life neatl packaged, but there is value in meditating on bot the brokenness and the beauty that can be found in the midst of this mess.

Tina D / creativecommons.org

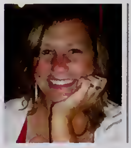
Lest we forget, the Christmas story is an earthy one. It's about something nebulous or mystical—God's Word and Spirit—becoming something tangible and made of human flesh. It's about a new life entering our midst and radically reorienting our world, just as a new baby comes and turns our days and nights upside down.

And the birth of something new is never without pain or loss of some kind. As my doula said when my daughter was born, "Being born is an earthy business. And it's painful. But it is productive pain. You are working to bring something ne into the world."

I'm not one to advocate for redemptive suffering. I do not believe God willfully doles out pain disagreement as part of a divine will or plan. I think God weeps and walks with us when we hurt. But I do think there is something to be sai for this idea that—sometimes—pain and events that reorient our lives can also make space for God to give birth to something new in our midst and give us a radically different glimpse of the Divine.

In one of his prayers, Michel Quoist, a French Catholic priest, writes, "The mother left the carriage for a minute, and I went over to meet the Holy Trinity living in the baby's pure soul. It was asleep, its arms carelessly laid on the embroidered sheet. Its closed eyes looked inward and it chest gently rose and fell, As if to murmur: This dwelling is inhabited. Lord, you are there."

Let us not shy away from the questions and those pieces that make our journeys together complicated and messy, for they might be the ver experiences and pieces that allow something ne to be born in our midst.



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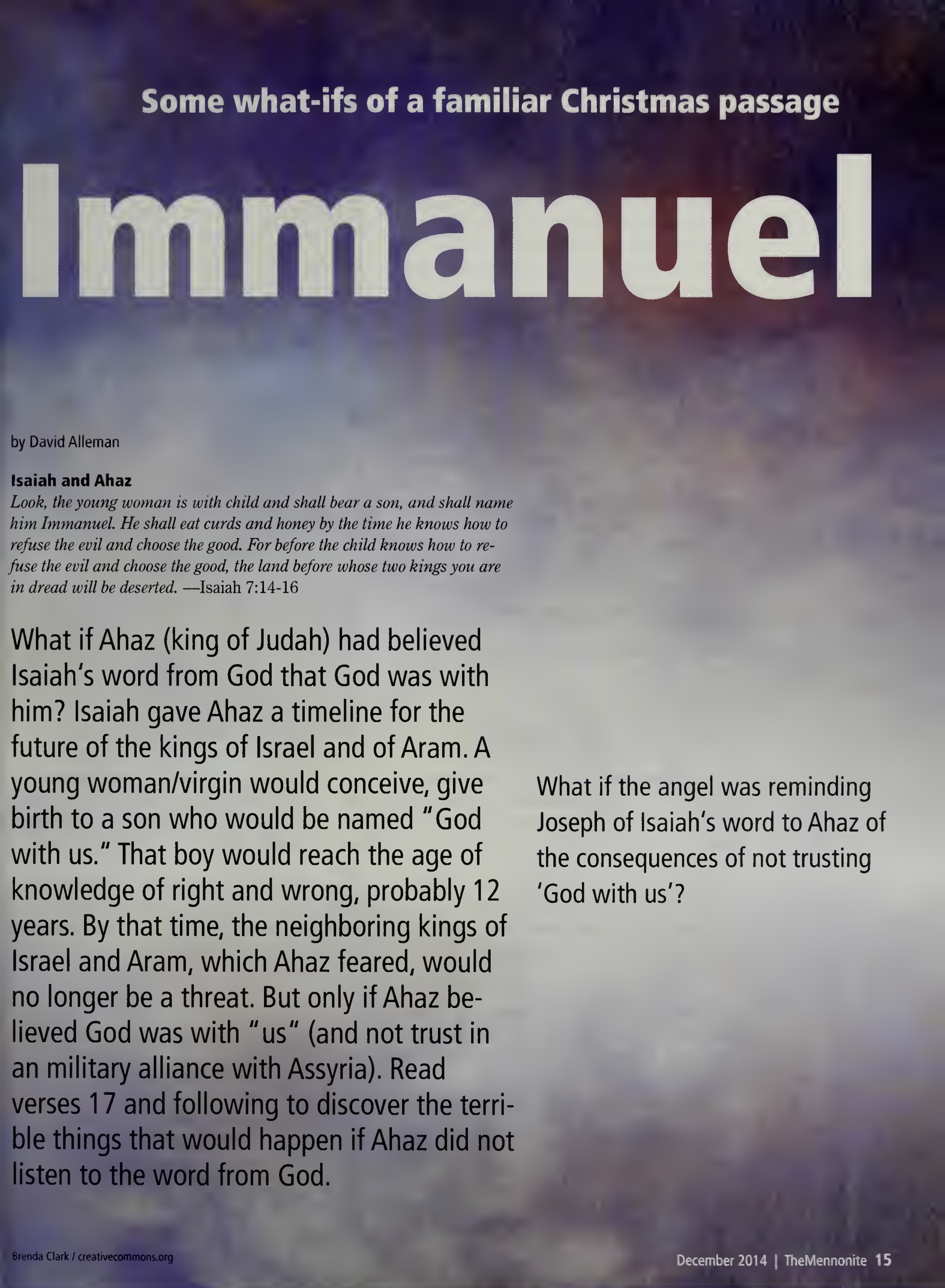

Some what-ifs of a familiar Christmas passage

Immanuel

by David Alleman

Isaiah and Ahaz

Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted. —Isaiah 7:14-16

What if Ahaz (king of Judah) had believed Isaiah's word from God that God was with him? Isaiah gave Ahaz a timeline for the future of the kings of Israel and of Aram. A young woman/virgin would conceive, give birth to a son who would be named "God with us." That boy would reach the age of knowledge of right and wrong, probably 12 years. By that time, the neighboring kings of Israel and Aram, which Ahaz feared, would no longer be a threat. But only if Ahaz believed God was with "us" (and not trust in an military alliance with Assyria). Read verses 17 and following to discover the terrible things that would happen if Ahaz did not listen to the word from God.

What if the angel was reminding Joseph of Isaiah's word to Ahaz of the consequences of not trusting 'God with us'?

Brenda Clark / creativecommons.org

What happened: Ahaz made an alliance with Assyria and traveled there. He liked the altar he saw there and had one made to use in Jerusalem—he may have been required by the treaty to erect an altar for Assyrian gods. Israel became a dependent of Assyria. During the time it took the young woman's son to reach 12, the kings threatening Ahaz and Judah were defeated, and one of them, Israel, ceased to exist as a nation.

What would have happened if Ahaz had trusted in "God with us"?

Five hundred years later

"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you will name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." This all happened so that what the Lord did speak through the prophet would be fulfilled: "Look! The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will name him immanuel," which means "God with us."—Matthew 1:20-23 (NET) [Emphasis from NET]

For Isaiah, Immanuel meant trusting God rather than turning to military alliances (violence).

What if the angel was reminding Joseph of Isaiah's word to Ahaz of the consequences of not trusting "God with us"? (I am not dealing in this article with the important questions of the nature of Jesus' birth and the incarnation.) Then we might conclude that part of the message was that Joseph's trust in God (Immanuel) was essential in the days to come. Challenges included social disapproval due to Mary's pregnancy, immigration to Egypt under the threat of death, and a son would be born into a world hostile to the message of "God with us."

For Isaiah, Immanuel meant trusting God rather than turning to military alliances (violence). The freedom fighters of a century and a half before Joseph, the Maccabees, decided that only by violent revolt against Syria and a military alliance with Rome could the people of God practice their religion as they should.

Their contemporary, the compiler of the Daniel experiences, called for faithful living like Daniel and his friends, teaching wisdom and trusting the visions of God's control of history.

Josephs Dream, 1907, Mikalojus Ciurlionis / wikiart.org

The "chief priests and rulers" of Joseph's time were part of the ruling class that gained power after the successful revolt against the Syrian (Seleucid) government. The Jewish leaders had chosen violence as a way to protect the temple and their way of worship.

After the Hebrews gained their independence, the Romans used the treaty with them as a pretext to take over Judah. Some of the chief priests and legal experts maintained their alliance with Rome for personal economic advantage as well as to protect their religious freedom.

Later, the legal experts were frequent opponents of Jesus during his teaching ministry. At th time of Jesus' torture and execution, the chief priests worked with the Romans to seek the deat of Jesus—Immanuel. Did the angel bring a word of warning to Joseph because they, like Ahaz, had made accommodations with the superpower of th day rather than trusting Immanuel?

What if the Persian astronomers had continued to look for the star they had seen in the East and

gone directly to Bethlehem rather than to Jerusalem? Although Bethlehem was only five miles from Jerusalem, it is possible to plot a path from "the East" directly to Bethlehem.

One could conclude that they gave in to popular notions of kingship and went to Jerusalem because it was the center of political and military power. If the Persian astronomers had continued to seek the star's guidance, would the deaths of the boy children around Bethlehem have been avoided?

The "chief priests and keepers of the law" were more concerned with maintaining their alliance with Herod than seeking "God with us." Could the astronomers have refrained from telling Jesus' location to Herod?

A dark shadow extends from Ahaz through the Maccabees and their descendants, the "chief priests and rulers" of Joseph's time, including with Herod. It continues through Caiaphas and his allies, who were willing to allow the Romans to kill Jesus to protect the place of the ruling classes in Palestine.

We are compelled to ask whether it extends to the "collateral damage" of drone strikes and assassinations by order of governments ostensibly seeking peace, freedom and order. Does it extend to the displacement of Palestinian Arabs and Syrian Arab Christians from land owned by their families for many generations? The question must be asked even if we acknowledge some moral distance between Herod's massacre of Judean boys and drone strikes.

Today many people of God argue that goodness/justice/freedom of worship can only continue through ultimate reliance on military solutions.

Consider, then, the line connecting Isaiah's understanding of Immanuel with the wisdom teachers in Daniel—who anticipate shining like stars if death came (Daniel 12:3)—rather than doing violence. The line extends to the angel's challenge to Joseph to trust Immanuel and to the angel's message of peace at Jesus' birth. The line extends to and beyond Jesus' weeping over Jerusalem: "If only they knew what made for peace."*

Today many people of God argue that goodness/justice/freedom of worship can only continue through ultimate reliance on military solutions (although some acknowledge the need for development and diplomacy). The consequences of this choice in Isaiah's time and in Joseph's and Jesus' time should challenge us to reexamine these texts for guidance today. The answer begins with our willingness to hear Isaiah and the angel's message, Immanuel: God with us.

*Isaiah, the Daniel editor and the Gospel writers see faithful covenant living as an essential basis for trusting Immanuel. I hope I have not obscured that basis by focusing on the issue of political/military alliances and the reliance on violence versus trust in God.

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I've read too much poetry for that

Poetry, personal transformation and peace

by Anita Hooley Yoder

You could say that I am a poetry convert. For me, literature—especially poetry—has channeled new ways of believing and being, bursting open my understanding of what is true and just. I didn't need poetry to convert me to belief in Jesus or to the way of peace. But it was poetry that enabled me to enter, if just for a moment, someone else's psyche and worldview and rich internal life. And once there, I found my perspective changing.

Alan Trotter / creativecon

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I suppose it began with Mary Oliver. I met her work in my late teens (and it felt like an encounter, as if someone had pushed through the page to speak with me). Oliver's words soon became like a second set of Scriptures for me. I read them when I woke up in the morning and before I went to bed at night. I memorized them during long walks in the woods, speaking their rhythm in time to the plodding of my feet. When I heard that my normally indefatigable mother was struggling, I sent her one of Oliver's poems, hoping it would help her. When my younger sister wondered about her place in the world, I used Oliver's words to assure her:

Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and
exciting—
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things. (from "Wild Geese" in *New and Selected Poems, Vol. 1)*

Oliver used the stuff of the natural world to pose surprisingly stark questions: "Who made the world? … / Who made the grasshopper? / This grasshopper, I mean— …" (from "The Summer Day"). "Have you ever tried to enter the long black branches / of other lives … ?" (from "Have You Ever Tried to Enter the Long Black Branches"). "… what is it you plan to do / with your one wild and precious life?" (from "The Summer Day"). Oliver's words felt like a homecoming for me—to the self, the Spirit and the world.

Soon after it was published in 2006, I came across Oliver's volume *Thirst* while browsing in a Pittsburgh bookstore. The poems in *Thirst* were more personally revealing than much of Oliver's previous work. Now it was impossible to miss her Christian convictions; the poems brimmed with allusions to the Psalms, to church, to "the Lord."

Thirst was also permeated with hints about the death of someone Oliver held fiercely dear. The book's back cover described the collection as Oliver's "grappling with grief at the death of her beloved partner of over 40 years." I had never considered Oliver's sexual orientation before. But paging back through *Thirst*, I saw how clearly she was speaking about her longtime partner/lover Molly Malone Cook, to whom the volume was dedicated. And what love was present there. What holy, healthy desire. When I returned home, I looked at the various volumes of Oliver's poetry I owned. They were all dedicated to Molly Malone.

I knew that some people—people I respected—in my religious tradition thought that homosexuality was a sin. But I also knew there was nothing sinful about the kind of erotic dedication I had been reading about, explicitly or implicitly, in so much of Oliver's work. My love and acceptance for queer folks in all their being ultimately developed due to real relationships with gay, lesbian and transgendered people, and through serious biblical study with open-hearted companions.

Yet all through this evolution, this refining, of my understanding, Mary Oliver was there, whispering her words in my ear. Oliver's poetry and person opened me to a different way of loving the world and living in it—a way I experienced as beautiful, even if not my own. This transformation, this blossoming, this deepening, has helped form me into a person more filled with peace—not a stolid and staid peace but a wide-open peace, one that welcomes and wonders instead of drawing lines, frowning.

When my younger sister wondered about her place in the world, I used Oliver's words to assure her.

Perhaps it happened next with Rumi. I had encountered pithy quotes from this medieval Sufi poet in several different contexts before I saw *The Essential Rumi* on clearance at a bookstore. I bought the book and found myself immersed in a new articulation of the sacredness that felt familiar. Rumi said things simply and clearly but with all the mystery still there (I never lost any of it, like I so often did in church services, where it seemed we shattered the mystery we approached more often than we reverenced it).

Rumi modeled the intrinsic longing for God that Christianity takes so seriously without nailing it down with a name, keeping his vision both personal and grand. "My soul is from elsewhere, I'm sure of that, / and I intend to end up there," he wrote, continuing later in the poem, "I didn't come here of my own accord, and I can't leave that way. / Whoever brought me here will have to take me home" (from "Who Says Words With My Mouth" in *The Essential Rumi*).

Rumi often sounded more like a poet for the 21st century than the 13th, employing stunning descriptions of God and humanity. His poetry was peopled with names familiar (Solomon, Moses, Abraham) and unfamiliar (Husam, Ayaz, Hallaq). Rumi even spoke of Jesus in ways that seemed fresh and not at all disconcerting, such as: "The miracle of Jesus is himself, not what he said or did / about the future. Forget the future. / I'd worship someone who could do that." (from "There's Nothing Ahead") Or: "Where Jesus lives, the great-hearted gather. / We are a door that's never locked" (from an untitled poem).

But Rumi didn't have a "personal relationship with Jesus," did he? How dare he speak of "our" Christ? How dare he write one poem about Abraham or Jesus and another about Muhammad or the Qur'an? And how dare he be so perceptive, so clearly in touch with what it means to love God, to love the world, the soul, the self?

Being truly transformed into a church—or a person—of deep and broad peace does not only mean expanding views of those who are outside the normal boundaries but also dealing with one's own history.

Before Rumi, I had considered myself generally open to the insights of other religions and respectful of their adherents. But after Rumi? After Rumi, I could no longer explain (to myself or anyone else) that being a Christian was the best way out of many options, the means of getting closest to God. No, Rumi was there, where I wanted to be, and he seemed to arrive there not through Jesus (or not only through Jesus) but through mystical conversation and whirling dances, through bowing to every child and butcher who crossed his path.

Reading Rumi, I did not lose my attachment to Christianity or my belief in the importance of Christ in my life. Far from losing its grounding, my faith only seemed to grow deeper. But it was also growing wider, spreading out as well as burrowing down. Despite all the news stories about radical Islam, all the theological arguments I had heard about the necessity of Christ, I could not pretend I didn't read that poetry, didn't drink from that cup of truth.

"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, / there is a field," Rumi wrote. "I'll meet you there." (from "A Great Wagon") I wanted to run through that field and brush hands and hearts wit the people who lived there. And poetry was my mode of transportation. Taking that transportation, that transformation, has left me more at peace with myself, with others and even with God. I began to perceive, or re-perceive, simple things: God is big. God includes. God loves. Simple things but ideas that I now knew could and perhaps should change my thinking and my life.

My poetic encounters helped me see the church's understanding of LGBT individuals and its view of other religions as "peace issues." In today's postmodern world, peace churches face the threat of being torn apart internally by debates about the queer community. We also face the threat of becoming irrelevant externally if we refuse to engage and embrace other faiths. However, being truly transformed into a church—or a person—of deep and broad peace does not only mean expanding views of those who are outside the normal boundaries. It also means dealing with one's own history.

It was another poet, Julia Spicher Kasdorf, who helped me grapple with (and grab, like Jacob's hold on the wrestling angel) my own religious and cultural heritage. I was introduced to her work while studying literature at a Mennonit college, the same college Kasdorf had attended. A Mennonite poet. A poet like me. Here were stories I knew, realities my ancestors lived, crafted into poetic form: women organizing leftovers, abiding enemy love, long-ago relatives with bonnets and beards.

Kasdorf's work carried a simultaneous critique and celebration of her/our heritage. There were certainly difficult, disturbing things she revealed about the conservative Mennonite background and family stories she inherited. Kasdorf spoke o Mennonite faith as a hard-fought, hard-working faith, tinged with a masculine sternness. Yet it seemed a kind of celebration simply for her to deem this faith heritage worthy of the painstakin craft a poem requires. There is a reverencing in simply remembering the past and speaking of it, even while exposing its nasty underbelly. The title poem in Kasdorf's second collection, *Eve's Striptease*, affirms her mother who let Kasdorf learn for herself

... all the desires
a body can hold, how they grow stronger
and wilder with age, tugging in every direction
until it feels my sternum might split
like Adam's when Eve stepped out,
sloughing off ribs.

At first I was disappointed to learn that Kasdorf had not "stayed Mennonite," imagining she had sloughed off our tradition like Eve sloughing off Adam's ribs. She had left the rural Indiana college we both attended for the cultural prospects of New York City. Her poems spoke not only of the Mennonite memories of her parents but of her life in Brooklyn, in Pennsylvania coal country, in academic halls. I learned that she had married and divorced and now attended an Episcopal church. But eight years after I first encountered her work and 20 years after the publication of her first poetry collection, I met Kasdorf at a writing conference and saw that she was still Mennonite, through and through. Something about her humility, her interest in younger Mennonite poets and her careful cultivation of her connection with the church showed there was no clean break, no turning back in disgust, no hurtling of sloughed-off ribs, at least not anymore.

Being a Mennonite does not only have to do with religion. It has to do with heart and heritage. People did not need to conform to my or anyone else's definition of "Mennonite"—and neither did I. Once again my definitions were expanding, and so was my hope. Perhaps there is a wider space than we realize in the harmony that has been a hallmark of Mennonite worship, an image Kasdorf uses this way: "Unaccompanied on Sundays, / those hymns in four parts, our voices lift with such force / that we lift, as chaff lifts toward God" (from "Mennonites"). Chaff is a negative image in most of its biblical citations, but here I think it has mixed connotations, a metaphor for a people of misplaced desire and admirable nonconformity. Even if we are chaff, we can lift toward God together—if we work at honoring each voice that is part of the song.

Kasdorf's work reveals what a complicated history we have to deal with as Mennonites. There is no simple narrative of a quiet, faithful people who held to their convictions against the evil world. There was an evil world within, too, a world of abuse and rigidity and fear. There still is, I suppose. Mennonite creative writing prompted my perception that being a "peace church" is not only an outward distinction; it also means we must be at peace with our past—not an easy peace that comes from glossing over historical wrongs or inconsistencies but a just peace that comes from dredging up the details and offering them to God (and each other) for redemption. Poets can help us do this, as they are often our most committed "dredgers," the most honest voices we have.

After a decade of reading, writing and studying poetry, I find myself spoiled toward certain viewpoints I used to hold or considered holding. I cannot think queer people are farther from God and God's Spirit—I've read too much poetry for that. I cannot believe other religions are less true or real than mine—I've read too much poetry for that. And as my perception expands, I cannot forget about the joys and challenges of my own tradition—I've read too much poetry for that.

Being a Mennonite does not only have to do with religion. It has to do with heart and heritage.

I do not mean to imply that every poetry-loving person—or every faithful person—must conclude that homosexuality is not a sin, that other religions are as true as Christianity and that our Mennonite heritage (or whatever heritage) is important to both criticize and celebrate. But we in the church must talk about these things, preferably in the church. We must learn how to have peace-filled conversation and cooperation among ourselves so that others will note that these Historic Peace Churches, which have been such a valuable witness in our world, still know how to be about peace. We have to know that ourselves, in our hearts, heads and bodies.

I hope that there will come a point when we have all read too much poetry for that—too much for hatred and bigotry and misunderstanding, and too much for the easy peace that comes from ignoring differences (outside and within our own body). For poetry teaches how to listen. It lets another consciousness, which some may see as holy, break through. May poetry convert us over and over, individually and communally. And may peace prevail, within us and through us, to the world.

Anita Hooley Yoder is a 2014 graduate of Bethany Theological Seminary. She is working on several writing projects. She and her husband live in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. This article is adapted from her prize-winning essay in the 2014 Bethany Theological Seminary essay contest.

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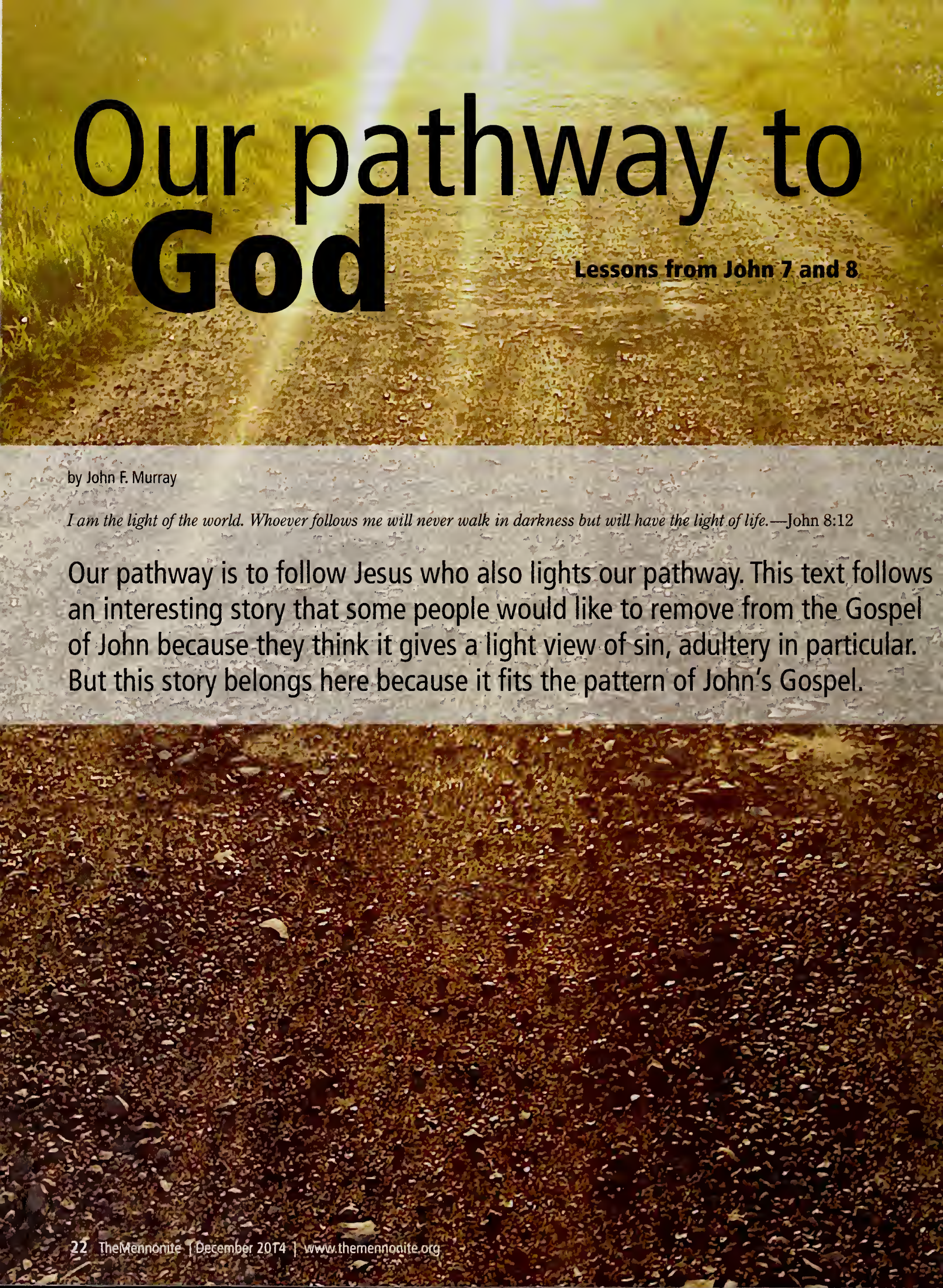

Our pathway to God

Lessons from John 7 and 8

by John F. Murray

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.—John 8:12

Our pathway is to follow Jesus who also lights our pathway. This text follows an interesting story that some people would like to remove from the Gospel of John because they think it gives a light view of sin, adultery in particular. But this story belongs here because it fits the pattern of John's Gospel.

This controversy has existed for a long time. The earliest manuscripts of the New Testament that exist today are from around A.D. 300. Some ancient manuscripts leave out this story of the woman found here. But then copiers put it in at the end of the Gospel. It appears their conscience was against leaving it out altogether.

Another manuscript of that time puts this story in the Gospel of Luke, after 21:38. William Barkley in his commentary *The Gospel of John, Vol. 2* wrote that the story existed as early as A.D. 100. And it appears in all the later manuscripts.

Saint Augustine, who was born in A.D. 354 and died in 430, was a bishop in North Africa. He wrote that some people wanted to leave this story out because it appears to take a light view of adultery, that the woman was forgiven too quickly and too easily.

In an appendix to his volume, Barclay includes a more detailed discussion on the pro and con arguments for including this story in the Gospel of John.

In studying John 7 and 8, I see a progression of ideas that confirms that this story of the woman taken in adultery fits well into the discussion of what takes place in these chapters.

"After this, Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him" (John 7:1). They wanted to kill him, a theme that runs through chapters 7 and 8.

Then Jesus did go up to Jerusalem for the feast of the Tabernacles, knowing that the Jewish authorities wanted to kill him. He confronted the Jewish authorities with the Law of Moses: "Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you looking for an opportunity to kill me?" (John 7:19). The law says, "Thou shall not kill."

The crowd recognized Jesus as the one the Jewish authorities wanted to kill. "Now some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, 'Is this the man whom they are trying to kill? And here he is, speaking openly, but they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that he is the Messiah?" (7:25-26).

The authorities responded to these whispers of the crowd as follows: "The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering such things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent temple police to arrest him" (7:32). Since when do we judge people by the muttering in the crowd, the political poll?

But then Nicodemus said to the authorities: "Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?" (7:51).

The obvious answer to Nicodemus is, "No, we don't kill anyone without knowing what he is doing." So they set up a situation with the woman as a trap in which they hoped to find reasons to accuse Jesus as follows.

"The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and, making her stand before all of them, they said to [Jesus], 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him" (8:3-6).

Some people wanted to leave this story out because it appears to take a light view of adultery, that the woman was forgiven too quickly and too easily.

We will come back to this story shortly. First let's see how this theme of killing Jesus goes on through chapter 8.

In John 8:13-59, the Jewish authorities engage Jesus in more conversation until Jesus claims that he existed before Abraham, and with that the Jews gathered up stones to kill him.

So these two chapters are about the scribes and Pharisees trying to find a reason to arrest and kill Jesus. They bring in this woman to set up a trap to find reasons to kill Jesus. This story fits here and the place is the Temple.

Now let's return to the story of the woman taken in adultery and examine it carefully.

Some teachers of the law and Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman they claimed to have caught in the very act of adultery; and they said to Jesus, "The Law of Moses commands that she be stoned. Now, what do you say, Jesus?"

Jesus responded by writing twice upon the ground. We don't know what he wrote. But the original Greek word for writing in the first case is "katagrapho" which means to record a law or decree. So Jesus may have written something like this: "The Law of Moses says, 'The man who commits adultery with another man's wife … both the man and woman, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall be put to death’ (Leviticus 20:10). Now, teachers of the law, if you caught this woman in the very act of adultery, the man must have been there. Why did you bring only the woman? Why did you forgive the man and let him go free? If you are so eager to keep the Law of Moses, why didn’t you bring the man also?” Why are you disobeying the very law you want me to uphold?

After Jesus had pointed out their disobedience to the law, their sin in letting the man go free, he stood up and said to the accusers of the woman, “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (8:7b).

Let us learn from them the ways that we are not to use the Scriptures, lest we who claim to follow the Scriptures come under the condemnation of the Scriptures we claim to follow.

Then Jesus bent down again and wrote a second time on the ground. The word used here for writing is “grapho” which means to record an accusation as in a court of law. As Jesus was writing this second time, the accusers left, one by one, from the oldest to the youngest. So it appears Jesus was listing the sins of the accusers. Perhaps these men were the adulterers with this woman.

Why would I say that? Well, these men said they were there and caught this woman in the very act of adultery. But they did nothing to stop that adultery.

When all these fellows had left, Jesus stood up and said to the woman, “Where are [your accusers]? Has no one condemned you?” She said, “No one, sir.” “Neither do I condemn you,” Jesus said. “Go your way and do not sin again.” Or, as the King James Version says, “Go and sin no more.” Or, “Go, and from now on, sin no more.” Forgiveness means that we leave our life of sin.

It is also significant that this story took place in the Temple. The Temple was a place to confess one’s sin, repent and receive forgiveness—release from one’s sin and guilt through the mercy of God. But in this story the teachers of the law and Pharisees wanted to turn the Temple into a place of judgment and condemnation. But Jesus returned the Temple to its real purpose—a place to release people from sin and help them begin a new life. This is what Jesus did for the woman.

Chapters 7 and 8 are about the ways people were *not* keeping the Law of Moses. In these chapters there are five illustrations of ways people were disobeying the Law of Moses.

1. In 7:19 Jesus said, “Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you looking for an opportunity to kill me?” The Law of Moses said, “Thou shalt not kill.”

2. In responding to the muttering of the crowd, “the chief priests and Pharisees sent temple police to arrest him” (7:32). Since when is it proper to judge people or situations by the muttering of the crowd, the political poll?

3. Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus earlier and who was one of their own number, said, “Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?” (7:51). The answer understood is: “No,

Markus Grossalber / creativecommons.org

we don't kill anyone without knowing what he is doing." So in 8:3-6, these leaders set up a situation with the woman taken in adultery as a trap in which they hoped to manipulate Jesus into giving them reasons to condemn him.

4. In 8:1-11, the scribes and the Pharisees disobeyed the law concerning adultery. They wanted to condemn only the women taken in adultery and let the man go free.

5. Also in these verses, the scribes and the Pharisees were disobeying the ceremonial law of the Temple, which declared the Temple the place to receive forgiveness of sin and restoration to new life. But these leaders were trying to use the Temple as a place of judgment and condemnation.

But let us not judge those leaders. Rather let us learn from them the ways that we are *not* to use the Scriptures, lest we who claim to follow the Scriptures come under the condemnation of the Scriptures we claim to follow.

This brings us back to our text. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." The story of the woman taken in adultery illustrates four things about the light of Jesus:

1. The light of Jesus reveals the true meaning of Scripture.
2. The light of Jesus reveals sin. He revealed the sin of the accusers of the woman.
3. The light of Jesus reveals forgiveness. He forgave the woman.
4. The light of Jesus reveals a new life. He said to the woman, "Go and sin no more."

As a retired pastor and an overseer in the Mennonite Church, I have four great concerns:

1. That we not be like the accusers of the woman who used the Scripture to manipulate, control and condemn other people.
2. That we have congregations with an atmosphere where people feel free to come, confess their sins, receive forgiveness and new life. More people would feel free to come if we would record sin like Jesus did. He wrote the sins of the accusers in the sand, where time and weather would wash out the record.
3. That we allow the light of Jesus to shine in our own lives and change us. Let his light reveal sin, but let his light also reveal his forgiveness for our sins. Let his light reveal the pathway to victory and the new life in him.
4. That we would be kind and loving and help each other find forgiveness and walk in the light as Jesus is in the light, so that we can have fellowship one with another and overcome our sins and together build God's kingdom in our homes, congregations, communities, nation and world.

Jesus wrote the sins of the accusers in the sand, where time and weather would wash out the record.

John F. Murray is a member of Hesston (Kan.) Mennonite Church.

Jason Jenkins / creativecommons.org

Dare to be a Daniel

Photo provided

Dan Shenk

A brother and sister are reunited.

by Anna Kathryn Shenk Eby

I hold a torch for Daniel, my brother. I was 8 when he was born, the youngest of our parents' five children. As part of our birthday celebrations, my father and mother recounted with awe the amazing event.

Throughout the long night of his birth, the song "Dare to be a Daniel" wafted through our mother's mind. "Dare to have a purpose firm; / Dare to stand alone."

My father, who had a passion for committing Scripture to memory, paced outside the birthing chamber and recited the Book of Daniel. When our parents came together, they said in unison, "His name is Daniel." As chief babysitter, I loved this wiry, resilient little brother.

After college, Daniel settled in New York City, continuing his education as he wedded theology and psychology at Union Theological Seminary. Following his graduation from Union in 1985, he was ordained as an American Baptist minister by Judson Memorial Church in New York City.

For several years he served as a case worker and spiritual provider in a Harlem residence for people who were homeless and/or mentally ill. He was also a prison chaplain for 11 years, serving in prisons in Virginia, including Virginia State Penitentiary, as well as on Rikers Island in New York City.

At the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, Daniel continued to be an astute, compassionate advocate for the marginalized.

In 1983, he became one of the cofounders of AIDS Resource Center (now known as Baily House), which pioneered in providing housing for people with AIDS (PWAs), who, because of the ravages of the disease, were no longer able to work and were being forcibly evicted from their apartments by landlords and sometimes even roommates.

At the earliest stages of the epidemic, he became known as one who could be counted on to minister last rites as well as perform countless funeral services, even as many clergy were still avoiding contact with PWAs.

For six years he co-led a support group for PWAs, their partners and caregivers. Over this time, 16 of the participants who'd been part of the group died.

During those years, Daniel did not show up at our family events, especially the celebration of holidays, citing that this was the loneliest time of year for the marginalized he ministered to.

It was much later, in the early 1990s, at my urging, that Daniel spent a weekend in my home. I will always remember a night of reconnecting as the rest of the household slept.

I discovered that the beloved friend (now deceased) that Daniel often referred to was actually his partner of unconditional love and support, as they empowered each other to be all they could be.

Daniel told me that he had reasoned years before that by moving to New York City he would live and work below the radar of his godly Mennonite family of missionaries and ministers, thus avoiding an embarrassment to the rest of us.

Daniel and I wept together that night as I begged him to forgive me for my obtuseness and preoccupation with my life. He forgave me, but how nearly I lost him!

Not long ago, Daniel sent me this missive: "Way back when I was at Union Theological Seminary, I went through a very dark time in which I came to an inward conclusion that in the coming years, contact with my family would become less and less and ultimately diminish altogether. I assumed that all my nieces and nephews were going to be fundamentalist evangelical Christians and that contact with the next generation would become nonexistent. Looking back on that time, I see how much I hurt you and Omar, who were both in Virginia and hearing less and less from me. I'm so sorry. I was living out that old cliché of leaving you before you could leave me. In the end, it was you, right after Edwin died, who had to ask me if I was gay."

At the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, Daniel continued to be an astute, compassionate advocate for the marginalized.

Again and again, Daniel has been the trusted spiritual counselor to my children and the children of my siblings. He has opened doors and windows not only to me but to my dearest ones.

I say this loud and clear, "Thank you, Daniel, for welcoming me to the Lord's table."

Anna Kathryn Shenk Eby lives in Harrisonburg, Va. Dan is a chaplain serving with the Healthcare Chaplaincy Network at St. Mary's Center in Harlem, N.Y., a combined adult day health-care program and skilled nursing facility for people with HIV/AIDS.

Drought among the Maasai

A North American worker's perspective

by Corinna Clymer Olson

Preservation of a community and its culture will require new coping mechanisms.

I am faced daily with the desire to love my neighbors in the midst of a cultural, environmental and spiritual crisis that is beyond our control. The Maasai people of Kenya are facing vast challenges far more complex than I can articulate and even understand. In this story, I outline my observations and experience in trying to infuse my interactions with my neighbors with dignity and love in the middle of the dichotomy of helping versus disempowering.

This year, our region missed the long rains (two to four weeks of heavy rains between March and May). Our neighbors comment about the intensity of the drought every time we exchange greetings.

We hand cut our grass, baled it into five bales and donated it to the neighbors for their hungry cows. The two wives came and carried them on their backs south along the path to their homestead. After that, the husband sent his wives every few days to cut a bag from what is left around the edges. They also collect the dried seed pods from under the big acacia tree for the cows in order to help them make more milk.

The author bails grass in Najile, Kenya. Photo provided

Many men of various ages have taken some or all their cows to far-flung places. There are large ranches on the other side of Nairobi where you can essentially "rent a meadow" and pay per cow per day to graze. Some go south toward Magadi into "olpurkel," the wilderness.

Homesteads now don't have milk for the family's favorite daily drink/food: "shaai." This is half water, half milk with a sprinkle of black tea leaves, brought to a boil, sieved, then loaded with sugar. Instead, they drink "strong tea," which is plain black tea. The remaining mainstays are now "ugali" (white corn meal boiled in a large stiff chunk) and porridge (cooked white flour and water). The men move around a lot, going to community events and town and so they get meat and potatoes more frequently than the women at home.

If the drought continues until the next rains, expected for one to three weeks between October and December, things could become dire. The people will get hungrier, and the cows, goats and sheep will start dying.

Why would things get so dire when there are thousands of head of livestock in this region? Couldn't these easily be sold to fund the purchase of food and household needs for all the people through any drought, let alone feed the people from butchering? The main reason is the essence of the Maasai people. Tradition.

The tradition of cows and livestock is so strong here that a man is not considered worth listening to if he has no cows. This is an oral culture, so being listened to is a big deal. How can he marry wives or have traditional ceremonies or pass on inheritance to his sons if he doesn't have cows? We've heard that people come around and mourn with someone who has lost his cows in a drought like it is a funeral.

Large parts of the Maasai community suffer greatly in a drought because of this tradition. Many people watch their wealth decrease until it dies and becomes only the value of its hide.

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window

Connecting the Bible with our ethics

Malinda Elizabeth Berry, PhD, assistant professor of theology and ethics

"Everything is connected." This phrase may sound trite, but as I help shape AMBS conversations about creation care, I want an "organic" view to shape how we integrate our ethical concerns and biblical perspective. That will help us be channels of God's Healing River that makes cities glad and soothes parched lands.

Let me share an example from the presentation centered around food deserts that I did this fall at AMBS' Rooted and Grounded conference.

The US Department of Agriculture uses census data to track food deserts, which it defines as "urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food." Diabetes, obesity and heart disease are all linked to life in food deserts with over half of food desert dwellers (13.5 of 23.5 million) also being poor. But this is only one layer of the food security matrix.

Folks like LaDonna Redmond, a food justice advocate, and Laura Leete, a University of Oregon professor, are helping us notice that when relief—well-stocked grocery stores—come to some neighborhoods, they replace food deserts with new problems: food hinterlands and food mirages, where food quality may be high but access to that food is low.

The assumption is that building a Trader Joe's, Whole Foods or Super Walmart will irrigate the food desert. Instead, these stores are the engines of the gentrification train. Newer businesses attract newer, often wealthier, residents. Older businesses and residents can no longer afford the property taxes, rents or other necessities, like groceries.

Commentators explain that when neighborhoods are at their lowest point, a typical financial solution puts a new grocery store front and center. Thus, a promising food source is also a tool for development that displaces people. Gentrification's race and class components mean young (often) white newcomers benefit, marginalizing long-time (often) black and brown residents.

Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, like most North American denominations, have church buildings and congregants in all kinds of communities. Some are witnessing gentrification, some know the loneliness of rural flight, and some are in food deserts or hinterlands.

I have started to think differently about where I fit into the web of life after participating in a 100-mile radius potluck group. We brought foods prepared with ingredients that had travelled 100 miles or less to our table. By learning more about foods produced nearby, we learned more about the rural communities that surrounded us. It even gave us—black, brown and white neighbors—a way to encourage our local supermarket chains to utilize local suppliers for produce.

When we pray for daily bread, we are saying that Christianity has something to do with our food system and with the way that public policy and what we eat have changed how and where we live.

When we think of ourselves as branches abiding in the vine, discipleship's biblical metaphors are a pathway to talking about how we want to participate in God's great work of healing our communities and healing our planet. ●

Photo: Malinda Berry (center) meets with students Rhonda Yoder and Ben Bouwman.

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Relying on God's abundance

Rooted and Grounded conference on land and discipleship

Our place in God's creation, and especially our relationship with the land, underscored the September 18–20 Rooted and Grounded conference at AMBS. Three keynote addresses drew from biblical texts to call us to greater faithfulness in our role as caretakers of creation. Each address also called us to greater trust in God's abundance to provide for us. We share brief excerpts here. For more information about the conference, visit www.ambs.edu/rootedandgrounded

Ellen Davis

We have lost confidence that we can have enough without overproducing, without hoarding, without laying waste to our land. In other words, we have lost the vision that communities can produce food within the limits of nature, rather than industry producing food by violating those limits. This story [Jesus feeding the crowd in John 6:10–15] speaks to our lack of confidence. It speaks of the daily generosity of God working through the created order and sometimes even human hands and heart. — *Ellen Davis, Amos Ragan Kearns Distinguished Professor of Bible and Practical Theology at Duke Divinity School, Durham, N.C., and author of* Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible *(Cambridge University Press, 2008).*

S. Roy Kaufman

We have many models of traditional agrarian cultures that through long experience have learned to live sustainably and productively on the earth, and our Native American brothers and sisters are the primary example of that. These are always very tenuous, marginal, usually compromised, always exploited communities, as with Israel's own story in the Old Testament. But still these agrarian cultures and traditional peoples, including the Israelites and Christian communities of rural America today, do hold the best promise of being able to shape a sustainable future for the human family and to bring healing to this earth of God's creation, now so badly disfigured by the exploits of urban civilization. — *S. Roy Kaufman, retired Mennonite pastor and author of* Healing God's Earth: Rural Community in the Context of Urban Civilization *(Wipf and Stock, 2013).*

Barbara Rossing

Early Christians created village communities right in the midst of the city, right in the midst of the empire—joyful communities that lived differently. They shared. They practiced *koinonia*. They ate differently.

Today as in the first century, we are called to live according to that compelling joy-filled, counter-imperial vision, as communities deeply grounded and rooted in the love of Jesus and this vision of abundant life gathered around that tree of life with its leaves for the healing of the nations. — *Barbara Rossing, Professor of New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Her publications include* The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation *(Basic Books, 2004).* ●

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ALUMNI NEWS

SeongHan Kim (Master of Arts: Peace Studies 2003), media director of Korea InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, has been named a Hanson Fellow. He is a PhD student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Chicago, studying intersections of missiology and peace studies.

Jeni Hiett Umble (Master of Divinity 1998) serves part-time as pastor of Living Light of Peace (formerly Arvada Mennonite) in Arvada, Colo.

Phil Bergey (Master of Arts: Theological Studies 1993) received a PhD in Human and Organizational Systems from Fielding Graduate University in Santa Barbara, Calif. He is an executive coach and process consultant with Design Group International and is currently also part-time interim lead pastor at Blooming Glen (Pa.) Mennonite Church.

Timothy Singenstreu (Master of Divinity 2003) was ordained June 15 at Salem Mennonite Church, Wooster, Ohio.

Dorothy Jean Weaver (Master of Divinity 1977) joined the editorial board for *The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies* (JIBS), edited by David R. Bauer and Frederick J. Long of Asbury Theological Seminary. ●

The gardens of AMBS

Growing for ourselves and to share

Rain gardens ... fields of wildflowers and prairie grasses ... vegetable gardens and a plot filled with melons. They literally nourish us and others in our community as we eat and share the bounty.

Students have expanded their garden plots and experimented with making maple syrup and crab apple jelly from campus trees. Our first Seed to Feed plot allowed us to use campus space to provide fresh produce to others. ●

A Seed to Feed Garden
574-295-3673

ABOVE: Ryan Harker, AMBS Master of Divinity student, harvested 400 pounds of melons this summer from a Seed to Feed plot on campus. AMBS joined an effort sponsored by Church Community Services in Elkhart to raise fresh produce for the food banks in the county.

ABOVE: Katerina Friesen (pictured) and Annika Krause tapped maple trees on campus and shared the resulting syrup along with corn bread for a morning break in spring.

LEFT: Adam Graber Roth, 2014 graduate now serving in Egypt, helped establish AMBS's first beehive. The wildflower gardens on campus provided nourishment for the bees, and the honey was used in meals for the Rooted and Grounded conference.

YOUR GIFTS AT WORK

At AMBS, we have four days of thanksgiving. In addition to two Thanksgiving Days (October 13 for Canada and November 27 for the U.S.), we have two Giving Thanks Days in late October when we express appreciation for donors. **Donations from individuals, congregations and businesses constitute almost one-half of AMBS annual income.** AMBS relies on tuition for only about one-seventh of our income each year.

Your gifts support all students, faculty and staff, and each fall we say an additional "Thank you" for gifts that ease the financial burden for students. Many students receive some form of financial aid, and students with demonstrated gifts for leadership in the church receive full-tuition scholarships. **Your contributions help remove financial barriers and burdens** for students and in this way you are investing in future leaders and the future health of the church. ●

AMBS PANORAMA

Anabaptist Witness launches

The journal, *Anabaptist Witness* (formerly *Mission Focus*), published the first issue in October. This issue focuses on Anabaptist and Mennonite understandings of mission and the interchange among mission practice, missiology and Anabaptist identity.

All content is available at no charge online: **anabaptistwitness.org**. The site also provides information about purchasing print copies.

Resources for conversations on sexuality

AMBS faculty are providing a collection of resources for conversations in the church during this time of discernment. Resources include careful biblical study, a call to praying for our enemies and a clear description of church governance. Visit **www.ambs.edu/publishing/sexuality-conversation.cfm.**

Also visit Sara Wenger Shenk's post, "Patient Vigor," on her Practicing Reconciliation blog: **www.ambs.edu/publishing/2014/09/Patient-Vigor-for-interesting-times.cfm**

Seminary Preview Days

Do you know someone who should be part of the 2015 incoming seminary class? Encourage him or her to plan a campus visit. Seminary Preview Days, March 27 and April 24, are the best times to meet professors and students and learn about financial aid and degrees. Register at **www.ambs.edu/visitAMBS**

Wilma Bailey recognized

Wilma Bailey, professor emerita of Hebrew and Aramaic Scripture at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Ind., received this year's Alumni Ministry and Service Recognition. She presented a paper at the Rooted and Grounded conference and returned October 16 for the recognition celebration.

Pastors Week, January 26–29

Where culture blurs theology: What is an Anabaptist Christian? will focus the conversation at Pastors Week. Four speakers will address questions of identity from their perspectives:

- Greg Boyd, PhD
- Drew Hart, PhD student
- Janet Plenert, MDiv
- Elizabeth Soto Albrecht, DMin

Visit **www.ambs.edu/pastorsweek** for further information.

Trail of Death pilgrimage

A **nine-day pilgrimage next summer will trace the path** of the 1838 forced relocation of the Potawatami Indians from their ancestral home in northern Indiana to present-day Osawatomie, Kan. David B. Miller, AMBS associate professor, will lead The Trail of Death: A Pilgrimage of Remembrance, Lament, and Transformation. The experience will be scheduled just prior to the Mennonite Church USA convention in Kansas City. Watch for further details at **www.ambs.edu/trailofdeath**. ●

PRESIDENT'S WINDOW

SARA WENGER SHENK

It was an ordinary weekday evening, but the meal was festive. To commemorate my husband Gerald's completion of a difficult writing project, I had prepared two highly spiced Ethiopian dishes for dinner. Our sons (then small boys) were delighted to rip off pieces of flat *injera* and dip them into the spicy *wat.*

While dousing flames in his mouth with gulps of water, our then six-year-old remarked, "I can't believe it! Just the simplest things at home can be so exciting!" I sank back into my chair for a quiet moment of exultation. Gerald's eyes shone across the table.

Food shared around table with family, friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, neighbors, even strangers, is among the most treasured blessings of what it is to be human.

Much of Jesus' ministry, both before and after his resurrection, took place at table. Most striking are the companions he chose to eat with. When Jesus ate and drank with those considered to be of questionable character, he extended shalom to "outsiders." When he fed the hungry, he demonstrated the very present goodness and justice of the reign of God. Jesus' table practices and sharing of food were inseparably linked with his mission to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

The early church continued Jesus' table practices, frequently "breaking bread" together, welcoming outsiders who were drawn to the goodness of life in Christ. As they participated around the Lord's Table, they remembered Jesus' death and celebrated his living presence made known to them in "the breaking of the bread."

During the Rooted and Grounded conference, we were reminded that enjoying the fruits of the earth is a central theme of the Scriptures. The energy among the participants was phenomenal. Trisha Tull, Professor Emerita of Old Testament at Louisville Presbyterian Seminary, wrote to student Ryan Harker: *"Thank you for helping create the most satisfying, well-organized conference I've ever attended. I loved the way it combined academic sophistication with wondrous worship, experiential opportunities, lovely new connections, and a peaceful, hopeful setting."*

We desperately need a revolution of hope at home—with children who thrive on the simple pleasures of the family table. And we desperately need a revolution of hope in our congregations and communities—readily offering warm hospitality around Christ's table and our dinner tables to those hungering for food and fellowship. ●

As recently as 15 years ago, there was much more communal land, fewer fences. The pastoralist tradition was that the people and their cow herds moved with the cycles of the weather so that the seasons of plenty and drought were expected. There were coping mechanisms built in to the Maasai lifestyle.

But the digital modern age has invaded Kenya. You see cell phones in almost every Maasai hand, and the huge city of Nairobi is only 50 kilometers away. Internal conflicts occur inside each Maasai person. Do we choose tradition or material progress? What do we leave? What do we take as we move forward?

And the population is exploding. In the last 10 years, Kenya's population went from about 30 million to about 40 million. In the rural areas, where the tribes traditionally practice polygamy, the population growth is astounding, with huge numbers of children per husband.

The Maasai of our region are caught between the new stationary lifestyle of land with fences and the traveling ways of old. Preservation of a community and its culture will require new coping mechanisms. Adhering to tradition also leads to a slowness to embrace alternative coping mechanisms to deal with internal and external community pressures and drought.

Men and women of the younger generation have been to school, even university. This group has at least an understanding of using livestock as a commodity, knowing when to buy and sell cows to make money instead of watching them die. But their fathers are still in control of the herds.

Outsiders, including development organizations, have for many years come in to hand out food when a drought comes. This causes grief for the Maasai. The community as a whole has not been required to take a serious look at themselves in order to face their changing world.

The result is a disturbing expectation that it is the responsibility of outsiders to come in and rescue them. This keeps them from breaking free into the wealth and vitality they actually have as a community. It keeps the community from requiring their leaders to stand up and make hard choices to save their culture, traditions and values. It keeps the men from having to take a look at how they are caring for their cows versus their wives and children.

In the midst of this culture-wide situation, many people end up suffering. The least powerful in a community—the women and children—get the worst end of it.

How does all this affect my work and life here in Kenya in a Maasai community? We talk constantly with our food security partner organizations about how they are addressing these things. They are Maasai themselves, and we can see even in them, the ones meant to be catalysts for change, that adjusting the way they arrange their lives is not easy.

Then there's my immediate neighbors. I watch the wives, my friends, getting leaner and leaner, knowing their limited diet, knowing my never-limited diet. Here I am in their midst, knowing that if I were to hand out food and try to rescue, I'd be feeding into the mentality of dependency. I would not be allowing room for the painful shove that comes after the proverbial push that causes us humans to change for our betterment.

So what can I do? Only small things, like a drop in an ocean.

I sing the songs of how to call people out of dependency in my work with the Maasai folks who implement the three projects we work with. I keep encouraging two young neighbors that have shown interest to grow their own kale garden by their door with the gray water they use during the day. I grow my own kale patch and periodically send neighbors home with a bagful (especially the pregnant ones). I give bits of work here and there, as I can find it, and often I make them shaai when they visit, with extra milk.

Most of all, I look into my neighbors' eyes, hold onto their hands and show them with all that is in me that they are dignified, valuable, capable people. And I pray they can hear what I'm saying.

Corinna Clymer Olson works with Mennonite Central Committee as food security coordinator in Najile, Kenya.

Note: These are complex cultural situations and I have one perspective: my own. I cannot presume to understand the profundity of the issues in only two and a half years of living side by side with my Maasai neighbors.

The author (right) with her Maasai neighbors in their Manyatta. Photo provided

Leading in anxious times

Sara Wenger Shenk
is president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind.

To be a leader with integrity and wisdom in anxious times requires deep knowledge of God's mercy-filled vision.

It's a sleepless night. I can't remember another one. Short nights, yes. But one entirely without sleep? No. At least not since those notorious all-nighters during college to cram for a test.

Am I anxious? Probably. Our family fabric is threatening to fray. Our denomination is feeling fragile and in danger of fracturing. Political paralysis and polarization pervade the nation. And it's dreadfully cold in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

My job as president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), a binational school, brings me to these windswept northern plains. Earlier this week, it was Winnipeg, Manitoba, and the Mennonite Economic Development Association annual meeting, where the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship moves courageously to meet the challenge of anxious times by "creating business solutions to poverty."

A week earlier, AMBS, in partnership with Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Canada Witness, convened business, mission and faculty leaders to imagine how to provide learning opportunities for multivocational leaders with entrepreneurial skills that are grounded in a holistic, Anabaptist missiology. The generative conversation seemed especially vigorous precisely because we live in anxious times.

The times are a'changing, and so fast that we're in danger of losing our balance, losing our bearings, losing sleep. Whole industries, including theological schools across North America, need to reinvent ourselves simply to survive. The market is shifting unbelievably.

As an educator by training, I know how important it is to the vitality of our faith communities that we attend to both continuity and change—continuity with the wisdom of our faith tradition and the possibility for innovative, adaptive change. Rootedness in the rich soil of God's vision in the Scriptures and readiness to risk new growth.

Unless we leaders are lovingly alive with Jesus' mission to preach good news, release captives, open eyes, and free the oppressed, our work will lose its transformative vitality. We will lose our way, disoriented by rapidly shifting sands.

Jesus, the early Christians and the Anabaptists lived in times of great anxiety and conflict. They model for us how staying rooted in the rich tradition of the Scriptures empowered them to become innovative leaders of revitalization. They broke with the consensus of their time because they glimpsed God's surging, joy-filled Jubilee vision for healing and hope.

My work on *Anabaptist Ways of Knowing* highlighted philosopher and scientist Michael Polanyi's "Society of Explorers." Polanyi contended that a great tradition provides the grounds both for its being maintained and for adaptive innovation. Exploration, he said, requires both authoritative, traditional frameworks that provide accountability and an openness to original, innovative insights from individual explorers.

The Anabaptists rediscovered the wellspring of their Christian tradition. They rediscovered the stories of Jesus and the early church. The ancient Scriptural tradition, with the Holy Spirit's inspiration, provided them with the link to their community's origins. Their devotion to Jesus liberated them to preach good news to the poor and release to captives. Their renewal movement dramatically showed that a great tradition provides the grounds both for continuity and revitalization.

I come from a family of entrepreneurs in business, mission and education. My parents wanted to capture the imagination of their children with their love for the Bible. Mother and Dad engaged in small business ventures to help support education that awakens people to the world creating biblical vision of God's good will for new contexts and generations.

I am grateful for the rootedness in the rich soil of the Bible they and many good teachers since have provided me and countless others.

To be a leader with integrity and wisdom in anxious times requires deep knowledge of God's mercy-filled vision for this messed-up marvel that is our world, found in the Scriptures.

To be a leader who is resilient, courageous and just in anxious times requires an understanding of the transformative power of God's vision that no one will "hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

To be a leader with bold imagination who is prepared to chart new paths in anxious times requires a nonanxious ability to speak the truth in love, graciously and transparently.

Perhaps now I can sleep, remembering that "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

Both sides are strong and also limp

I grew up Old Mennonite (Mennonite Church, MC), graduated from Goshen (Ind.) Biblical Seminary and pastored two Old Mennonite congregations, one dual-conference congregation and one former General Conference Mennonite Church congregation. I am now retired and a member in a former GC church.

When I supported the merger of the two denominations, I was not aware of the profound differences between the two groups. As I see it now, the two denominations began living together without getting married.

We didn't effectively combine the different ways we worked together and made decisions. The former MCs traditionally had a top-down, hierarchical bishop/conference system, and the former GCs were congregational. This living arrangement worked until we came to the discussion around homosexuality.

Then the two ways of resolving issues collided, and the current living arrangement is not working. At the same time, the lines have blurred. Now there are progressives and conservatives across all area conferences.

Would it be possible to let the various area conferences do the 'GC thing'?

Some of us call for unity and continued talking. However, that does not address the real issue for conservatives.

As I see it, the two groups have different understandings of Scripture and church discipline. For many, what is at stake is simply a different interpretation of Scripture, and continuing talking is the most logical thing.

On the other hand, with a conservative understanding of Scripture, the issue seems clear and unmistakable.

1 Corinthians 5:1ff. says, "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found among pagans. … And you are arrogant! Should you not rather have mourned, so that he who has done this would have been removed from among you?… Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? … I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral persons. … But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother or sister who is sexually immoral or greedy, or is an idolator … do not even eat with such a one. … Drive out the wicked person from among you."

It seems to me that different interpretations of Scripture passages such as this form the backbone of our differences. Progressives tend to see Scripture more as a guide that needs to be interpreted in the light of Christ and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, while conservatives tend to see it as more like a rule book.

Someone may say Jesus was inclusive, that he reached out in love and continued talking and that that is what we should do, but Jesus apparently did not face this situation.

In the case of the rich young ruler, a case of possessions, not sexual immorality, Jesus simply let him walk away. I can imagine some of today's liberal people running after him and trying to convince him to continue talking.

We have been talking and talking, and it seems those who support same-sex marriages will not be changing their positions.

They do not see it as sinful, so what is a conservative to do? For the conservative, to remain in fellowship with what seems like flagrant immorality makes them a partner in sin.

Would it be possible to let the various area conferences do the "GC thing" and be accountable only to themselves and responsible for themselves. Individual area conferences would not be responsible for or accountable to the other conferences.

As we are now doing, individual congregations could line up with conferences where they feel comfortable.

I don't know if this would satisfy the conservative conscience or not, but unless we can relieve the sense of accountability/responsibility for "wrong" decisions made in another far-off conference, congregations/conferences will continue to walk away.

I do not want to see more divisions in our church. We have had too many already. I believe both sides have their strengths and both also limp. How can we move forward together?

Don Nofziger is a member of Eighth Street Mennonite Church in Goshen, Ind.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent the official positions of Mennonite Church USA, *The Mennonite* or the board for The Mennonite, Inc.

Gulf States vote falls short of two-thirds majority

A task force will discuss how to move forward and report back next Jan. 31.

Gulf States Mennonite Conference (GSMC) delegates met Nov. 1 at Des Allemandes (La.) Mennonite Church to vote on whether to withdraw from membership in Mennonite Church USA. Sixty percent voted to withdraw, but a two-thirds majority is needed to change the conference's constitution, so the vote fell short.

More than double the usual number of delegates attended the meeting, according to one source.

Mark Roth, GSMC moderator, said in a telephone interview on Nov. 1 that delegates agreed to initiate a task force to work on how to move forward. "We have to deal with the reality of 60 percent of our members wanting to withdraw from Mennonite Church USA," said Roth, a district minister who lives in Clinton, Miss., and attends Open Door Mennonite Church in Jackson, Miss.

GSMC consists of around 700 members in 12 congregations, and all but three or four of these congregations have said they want to leave, said Roth.

For me this is a day of grieving, that we can't stay together and focus on the things we agree on.—Mark Roth

The task force is made of people from the conference's executive committee, leadership commission, delegate body and pastors' council, Roth said. It will announce its report by Jan. 31, 2015. The churches wanting to withdraw will wait until then, he said.

"For me this is a day of grieving," said Roth, "that we can't stay together and focus on the things we agree on."

Those congregations wanting to leave Mennonite Church USA have said they cannot agree with the direction the denomination is going.

Dave Weaver, a district minister in GSMC, said on Nov. 3 that many people in the conference "have compromised over and over for the sake of staying together with others who openly promoted views that were unscriptural and in disagreement with our denomination's stated beliefs." He said he believes "it was our willingness to compromise in the first place that has brought us to this place."

Nevertheless, he said, he prays that "we can separate amicably and with love. It will not be without a sense of sorrow. Looking forward, however, brings the encouragement that we can go and make disciples without the ongoing, never ending discussion on human sexuality."

Charlene Clay, a member of the host church, read several passages from Menno Simons, then said, "If we leave Mennonite Church USA, we will not be losing our Anabaptist roots; we will be rediscovering them."

If we leave Mennonite Church USA, we will not be losing our Anabaptist roots; we will be rediscovering them.—Charlene Clay

Terry Shue, director for leadership development for Mennonite Church USA, spoke at the meeting and urged the group to wait until at least the upcoming delegate survey this spring in order to use their influence to help shape the direction of the larger church.

In a Nov. 7 email, he said that "members of [the] task force who are charged to discern a way forward are truly in my prayers."—*Gordon Houser*

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ACC accepts church despite diverse views

Frazer (Pa.) Mennonite Church joins Atlantic Coast Conference in October.

On Oct. 25, after a deliberate process led by the Atlantic Coast Conference's executive committee in September, ACC delegates accepted Frazer as a full member of ACC.

John Denlinger, moderator of ACC, said that unity among delegates—despite differing views on LGBT inclusion—was possible through reframing the question.

The question for the leaders at their Sept. 18 meeting was not, Do we support LGBT inclusion? said Denlinger on Oct. 7.

"We were not making a theological statement. Instead we were saying that Frazer has met the full membership qualifications as stated in our conference bylaws," he said. "So the vote was really about following our ACC history and practice of congregational polity and not a theological position in regard to LGBT issues."

Denlinger acknowledged that not everyone is at the same place regarding LGBT inclusion within ACC.

"But for the purpose of the October vote, we saw them as separate issues," Denlinger said.

The ACC executive committee recommendation passed with an 88 percent approval from ACC delegates.

The vote was part of the ACC fall delegate assembly at Blossom Hill Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pa.

Frazer transferred from Lancaster Mennonite Conference in June 2013, as it was in conflict with Lancaster Conference's expectations for membership policies, among other reasons. ACC invited the congregation to become an associate member.

Frazer claimed the identity of being a "welcoming, connecting and healing " place long before "welcoming" took on a certain meaning related to a position on LGBT individuals, said Brenda Martin Hurst, the church's pastor, on Oct. 29.

Changing from Lancaster Conference to ACC was "never only about our response to LGBT individuals seeking membership," she said.

In addition to this reason, Frazer wanted to belong to a conference with a clear and unified commitment to Mennonite Church USA, congregational representation in decision-making and a shared calling to practice unity amid diversity, she said.

ACC has other LGBT-welcoming churches—for example, Community Mennonite in Lancaster; Manhattan Mennonite in New York; and Boston Mennonite—but Frazer has been more public because it is a new church in the conference.

"We are delighted and celebrate that Frazer is a full member of ACC," said Denlinger on Oct. 27.

"Being full members finally settles the question of Frazer's conference affiliation after three years of some uncertainty," Martin Hurst said. "We can now focus our attention and energies on other priorities."

The process leading up to the recommendation for the delegates began with a day hosted by the executive committee to gather all ACC credentialed leaders.

"We really wanted this recommendation to have broad ownership—not just from the executive committee but from all pastors," said Denlinger.

Throughout the day they worked slowly at table groups.

(The churches from New York City were not present at the September leaders gathering, but they would have represented a similar spectrum, said Denlinger.)

By the end of the day, the leaders were able to say, "For now, we are responding to Frazer and accepting the church as a full member, but we're not coming out with a statement on LGBT inclusion," Denlinger said.

"When we sat there at the end of the day, we realized God's Spirit was at work. It was clearly beyond us," he said. "Frazer was a gift to us and allowed us to talk freely about this issue."

The credentialed leaders agreed to go back to their congregations and communicate this process after the gathering.

Since being received as an associate member, Frazer has been participating just like a full member by being fully present at all the conference gatherings and supporting the conference financially.

During the business session, delegates received a request from Sandy Hill Community Church, Coatesville, Pa., to be released from ACC. They will join the Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical Congregations, according to Denlinger.—*Anna Groff*

Photo provided

Brenda Martin Hurst, pastor of Frazer (Pa.) Mennonite Church

Japanese Mennonites protest government's proposal

Statement asks for reversal of reinterpretation of pacifist postwar constitution.

David Fast

Pastor Yukari Kaga and mission worker Mary Beyler at Obihiro (Japan) Mennonite Church

Reacting to a proposed change in Japan's ban against making war outside of its borders, Japanese Mennonites issued a statement reaffirming its antiwar stance.

The protest issued in September was in response to the Japan Cabinet's decision in July to reinterpret the country's pacifist postwar 1947 constitution that limits the use of force to defend Japan. The proposed change would allow the East Asian nation to take offensive action outside its borders to help defend allies "in close relationship."

The Hokkaido conference of churches has long established that their antiwar stance is based on faith in Jesus. The Sept. 20 statement sent by the Peace Mission Center of the Nihon Menonaito Kirisuto Kyokai Kyogikai (Japan Mennonite Christian Church Conference), the conference of Mennonite churches of Hokkaido, Japan, to the administration of Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, reads in part:

"It is contrary to the hopes for peace—not only of Japanese people but also people in the rest of the world—to permit the exercise of the right of collective self-defense. We Christians, who follow the nonviolent way of life of Jesus Christ and eagerly support peace and justice as disciples of Jesus Christ, serve people suffering from various acts of violence because of wars, poverty and injustice. As a result, we strongly ask for the withdrawal of the decision of the current administration because it violates the principles of the Constitution, and we are against any further related revisions."

The government has not responded to the statement.

Within and outside Christian circles, Hokkaido Mennonites are letting their convictions be known and encouraging others to do likewise. Yukari Kaga, pastor of Obihiro Mennonite Church and Peace Mission Center board member, said that unlike large denominations, our small conference is united in the stance that "the peace of Jesus is foundational in our faith."

As a result of the antiwar controversy, young people are also speaking out, taking a stand and becoming aware of free-speech issues and the free exchange of ideas.

"For the school newspaper, they write about what they perceive as odd, and their comments are read by the whole student body," says Yasuko Momono, a high school teacher and newspaper advisor, who is a member of Furano Nozomi Mennonite Church and a Peace Mission Center board member.

Mary Beyler, a Mennonite Mission Network worker who serves with Mennonite congregations in Hokkaido, says the church asks for prayer to be faithful followers of Jesus in the way of peace.

"Recently, I frequently hear Japanese Mennonites speaking about what we can and should be doing as Japan seems to be heading back to being a country that makes war," Beyler says. "If we stay silent now, if we don't express and act on our convictions now, we won't have a voice later when the situation worsens."

The peace of Jesus is foundational in our faith.
—Yukari Kaga, Japanese pastor

In surrendering to the United States to end World War II Japan agreed to no longer initiate war. Its current Self Defense Force was established in 1954 for only domestic and narrow military support operations. Recent interpretation allowed backing of U.S. troops in Afghanistan with infrastructure support. Some Japanese politicians and citizens want the self-defense limits to be lifted, for fear of aggression from neighboring countries in northeast Asia.

Japanese Cabinet members were criticized by China and South Korea for paying tribute to Japan's militaristic past by visiting Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine for war dead in October. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was also criticized for sending a ritual offering there. The shrine is considered a symbol of Japan's past militarism. Japan occupied parts of China before and during World War II, and Japan colonized Korea from 1910 to 1945.

No longer considered an enemy since the outbreak of the Korean War from 1950 to 1953, the United States supports the policy change of its ally, Japan.—*Wil LaVeist of Mennonite Mission Network*

'Open Letter' goes viral with unprecedented response

Online post receives more than 164,000 unique pageviews in six days.

Chester Wenger's "Open Letter to my Beloved Church" went "viral" in the beginning of November. Wenger, 96, is a retired pastor and church leader.

His 1,604-word letter (see page 36) explains why he officiated his son Phil Wenger's same-sex marriage ceremony in July, as well as how Lancaster (Pa.) Conference responded by terminating his credentials.

"We believe this is an opportune moment for the church to boldly proclaim a pastoral, grace-filled readiness to include both homosexuals and heterosexuals within the blessing of a marriage covenant designed to be wholesome and God-honoring," Wenger writes.

In five days, readers posted more than 210 comments to the online letter.

The Mennonite staff posted the letter on its website on Nov. 6. By Nov. 11, major news outlets had picked up the story, including People.com, Fox News, Huffington Post, the *Miami-Herald*, the Houston Chron.com and many Pennsylvania news sources.

In the letter, Chester writes that he reported his decision to Lancaster Conference leaders.

"They responded with grace-filled pastoral listening, while acknowledging that what I'd done was out of step with established credentialing agreements with other Mennonite conferences," he writes.

On Nov. 7, Keith Weaver, moderator of Lancaster Conference, said: "Following a review process that was experienced as mutually gracious and respectful, the Lancaster Mennonite Conference Credentialing Commission took action to terminate Chester's retired credential. This action was based on LMC's commitment to the guidelines for membership in Mennonite Church USA, which state that pastors holding credentials in a conference of Mennonite Church USA may not perform a same-sex covenant."

In less than six days, Wenger's letter had over 164,000 unique pageviews, according to Google Analytics for the website (see box). (Unique pageviews refers to the number of individual visitors who have looked at the page, and repeat viewers will only be counted once.) This is four times the amount of unique pageviews the entire website received in the month of September.

"That's a massive response in a denomination with less than 100,000 members," writes blogger Tim Nafziger.

In the weeks following, readers posted more than 233 comments to the online letter. The majority of comments affirmed Wenger and his decision, although others questioned his actions.

On Nov. 7, Lancaster Online and WGAL covered the news of Wenger's letter and Lancaster Conference's response, which drove traffic to *The Mennonite*'s website.

Chester and Sara Jane, his wife, have eight children (one deceased). He is a former pastor and current member of Blossom Hill Mennonite Church in Lancaster. He held major leadership positions with Eastern Mennonite Missions and Meserete Kristos Church in Ethiopia.—*Anna Groff*

Statistics

Unique pageviews: 164,000

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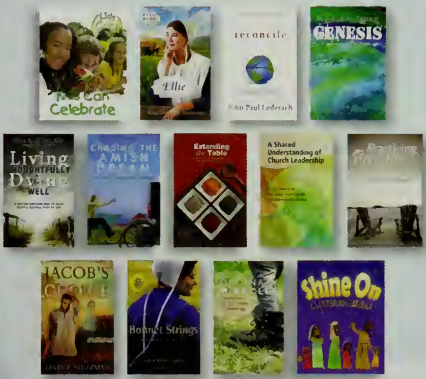

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An open letter to my beloved Mennonite church

Retired pastor and missionary, 96, urges the church to bless same-sex marriage.

I am profoundly reluctant to write this letter because I know there are those it will wound deeply. But I have also come to the conviction that I can no longer hide the light the Lord has lit within me under a bushel. I want to share with you what the Lord has been telling me and my dear life companion.

First, a defense of my ministry—if you will allow me to paraphrase the words of the Apostle Paul from Philippians 3:4ff.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more:

- Baptized into a Virginia Conference Mennonite church as a young boy, youngest son of a Mennonite evangelist and second president of Eastern Mennonite School (now Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va.), A.D. Wenger.
- Mothered by a diligent student and teacher of the Scriptures, the oldest daughter of a Lancaster (Pa.) Mennonite Conference (LMC) bishop and faithful to her church in every way.
- At the request of LMC ordained in 1949 by Virginia Mennonite Conference for mission work in Ethiopia.
- Appointed by Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM) of LMC as the educational director for the Mennonite mission in Ethiopia.
- Founded and taught Bible in the Bible Academy of Nazareth Ethiopia, which was established to train potential leaders for the budding Meserete Kristos Church (MKC).
- First elected chairman of Ethiopia's MKC, now the largest Mennonite church in the world.
- Happily turned the MKC chairmanship over to an Ethiopian who later was chosen and served as president of Mennonite World Conference.
- Began and taught in various educational programs in LMC that were centered on Bible teaching (e.g., Keystone Bible Institutes, Paul Timothy Program).
- Former director of Home Missions of EMM.
- Former pastor and still a member in good standing of Blossom Hill Mennonite Church in Lancaster, a thriving congregation of many young adults and young families.
- Lifelong student of the Bible, and when it comes to quoting Scripture passages, I would be ready to compete with anyone.
- Father of eight children (one deceased), all of whom love the Lord and serve his kingdom.
- Pleaded for patience when my congregation decided to leave LMC over the women's leadership issue to join Atlantic Coast Mennonite Conference.
- Loyal member of LMC to this day.

Chester and Sara Wenger

- When it comes to my desire to be faithful to the laws o God and to walk uprightly with my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, my children and many, many Ethiopian and U.S. witnesses will vouch for my integrity.

My life has been filled with much joy seeing God at work in numerous settings. God's grace has been shown daily on my behalf. But as the Apostle Paul has said so well, "Whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things."

So, with all of the above acknowledged, what is the light I've been hiding under the bushel?

- When our gay young adult son about 35 years ago was excommunicated from the Mennonite Church by a church leader without any conversation with him or his parents, my wife and I grieved deeply.
- For many years, in the company of other grieving parents of homosexual people, we have told our stories, read and reread the Scriptures. Most striking to us is that God, who created the world, who gave us Eden, also gives us the "leaves of the tree for the healing of the nations."
- The world we live in is no longer the idyllic Eden. It is a broken, complex, messy, violent yet wonderful world.

God's mercy-filled grace infuses our broken world with a goodness that keeps surprising us with joy—and healing. God's grace also calls us to faithfully love God and neighbor above all else.

- The church we belong to has the power to bind and loose. Today's church, much like the early church, has the Spirit-given power to rethink whether or not "circumcision" will continue to define who is in and who is out.
- Because of the brokenness of all sexualities that abuse, lust, access pornography, have sex with unmarried partners of the same or the other gender, the church must rise up to reclaim a godly and wholesome sexuality:
  - ◆ a godly sexuality that is wholesome because it is covenanted, accountable to and blessed within the church (not left to fend for itself outside the church);
  - ◆ a godly sexuality that is wholesome because it calls us all to recommit our bodies (whether heterosexual or homosexual) to be temples of the Holy Spirit, seeking first the kingdom of God and covenanting to follow Jesus every day.
- When my wife and I read the Bible with today's fractured, anxious church in mind, we ask, what is Jesus calling us to do with those sons and daughters who are among the most despised people in the world—in all races and communities?
- What would Jesus do with our sons and daughters who are bullied, homeless, sexually abused and driven to suicide at far higher rates than our heterosexual children?
- We know from Deuteronomy that eunuchs were a sexual minority, loathed and considered unacceptable for admission to the "assembly of the Lord," yet in Isaiah 56 the Lord says: "Do not let the eunuch say, 'I am just a dry tree.'.... I will give them a name better than sons and daughters ... for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples."
- Sara Jane, my dear wife, and I love all our children. We give thanks for the remarkable kingdom work each of them is doing. We know that several of our children believe that the church should not endorse same-sex marriage. And several of our children believe that same-sex marriage is a faithful and godly choice when blessed by the church.
- While the tension around this issue is painful in our family, we continue to love each other, to sing, pray and play together. Our children all honor us with deep devotion and faithful care—and genuinely enjoy each other.
- My wife and I are devoted to our Lord, with a firm commitment to the authority of the Scriptures. We strive to be faithfully obedient to Jesus.
- We invite the church to courageously stake out new territory, much as the early church did. We invite the church to embrace the missional opportunity to extend the church's blessing of marriage to our homosexual children who desire to live in accountable, covenanted ways.
- We know that while many of us hear different things from the Scriptures, God's deepest desire, as made known in Jesus Christ, is "to seek and to save that which was lost." We believe this is an opportune moment for the church to boldly proclaim a pastoral, grace-filled readiness to include both homosexuals and heterosexuals within the blessing of a marriage covenant designed to be wholesome and God-honoring.

This is the light that has been burning more and more brightly under my bushel, and I am now prepared, finally, as a 96-year-old, still zealous missionary, to let it shine. So ...

- When the laws of Pennsylvania changed in July, our gay son and his committed partner of 27 years went immediately to apply for a marriage license. Subsequently they asked me if I would marry them. I happily agreed. We held a private ceremony with only six people present. Our son and his partner are members of an Episcopal congregation, but they chose my wife and me to share with them in this holy covenant of marriage. For a short meditation I used the words of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians: "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgives you."
- When I reported this event to LMC leaders, they responded with grace-filled pastoral listening while acknowledging that what I'd done was out of step with established credentialing agreements with other Mennonite conferences. Afterward, the LMC Credentialing Committee met on Sept. 10 and retired my credentials. I am at peace with their decision and understand their need to take this action.
- I know people will accuse me for my transgression, but my act of love was done on behalf of the church I love, and my conscience is clear. I feel that my act of love in signing a marriage license for our son and his companion was in line with the actions of Peter and Paul, who led the church of Christ to welcome the uncircumcised into the fellowship of the family of God.
- Paul and Peter both received harsh criticism for years for their deeds, but the Holy Spirit led the Jerusalem conference to heartily approve their testimony and leadership. My prayer is that our church leaders in their next assembly will likewise not only approve but warmly invite into congregational fellowship those believers in Christ who have suffered exclusion from membership in our Mennonite church. Let us pray the Spirit of Christ will teach us all how to love and welcome the outcasts as Jesus did.
- My dear companion of 70 years and I declare our enduring love for LMC, for Mennonite Church USA, for the Meserete Kristos Church and for all God's people. We carry no bitterness or regret for our actions. Our hearts are filled with love for all.
- We pray that our love in family and church will bind us together in God's family even when our understandings of God's will may differ. Christ's prayer for oneness in John 17 can be attained.

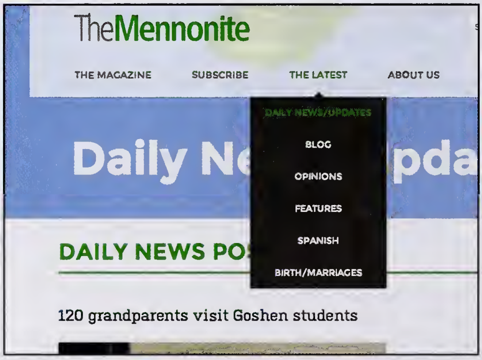
With joy that abounds, Chester Wenger

How to use *The Mennonite*'s new website

A step-by-step guide to exploring themennonite.org and viewing an issue

Our new website launched in October, and we invite you to explore it. You will find that under "The Latest," our website includes several sections of content.

1. "Features" include longer, feature-style pieces, mostly from the print magazine.
2. "Opinions" include columns from the print magazine as well as many web-exclusive pieces written in first person.
3. "Daily News" includes original news pieces written by *The Mennonite* staff as well as press releases from Mennonite Church USA agencies and related organizations.
4. Finally, the "Blog" features a variety of writers.



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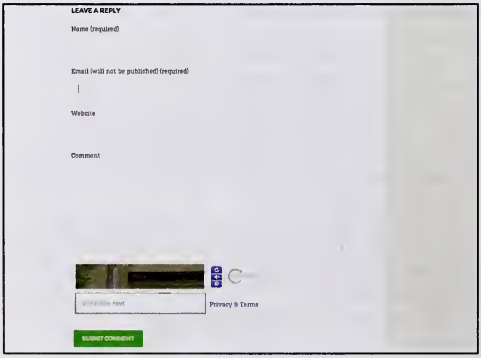

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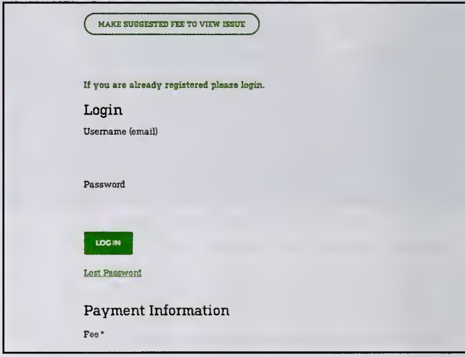

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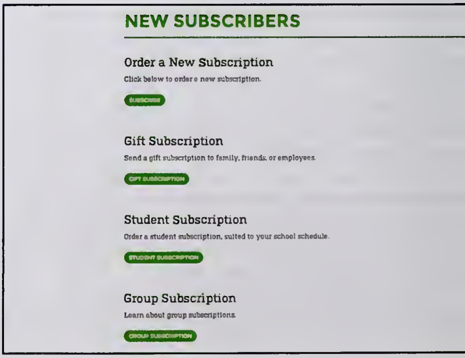

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Preparing multivocational, entrepreneurial pastors

Student debt, small congregations, immigrant congregations affect pastors.

Designs for equipping multivocational leaders with entrepreneurial skills and a view toward mission took shape as 23 business, mission, pastoral and educational representatives gathered for a three-day consultation in Chicago.

Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Church Canada Witness hosted the consultation on multivocational entrepreneurial ministry Oct. 31-Nov. 1.

All the pastors who participated combine congregational ministry with other occupations. For some it is a necessity. Yoel Masyawong, pastor of Grace Lao Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ontario, said he works several other jobs so "I don't need to burden the church."

Others choose to combine ministry with another occupation. "If I find myself in bivocational ministry, it's because I can't make up my mind," said Gerry Binnema. He is pastor of United Mennonite Church, Black Creek, British Columbia, and an airline safety consultant.

Leonard Dow was involved in banking when he felt a call to ministry in his congregation, Oxford Center Mennonite Church in Philadelphia. "I didn't walk into my call; the call jumped on me," he said. Conversely, Jeremy Shue, member of the pastoral team of Silverwood Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind., said that when he studied at AMBS in Elkhart, Ind., "I knew I had a call to ministry and that I had a call to business."

While the stories from participants were interspersed through the weekend, an environmental scan provided context for the discussion from the beginning. AMBS staff reported from recent research on student educational debt, showing upward trends in the burden of debt students carry into ministry. Mennonite Mission Network and Mennonite Church Canada Witness staff reviewed how educational debt has become a disincentive for people who feel called to serve in mission.

SaeJin Lee, research assistant for AMBS, pointed to the Christ-given gifts for apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds (pastors) and teachers, highlighted in Ephesians 4:11-13. This text became a recurring theme in the following discussions, as participants emphasized the need today for the gifts of apostles, prophets and evangelists, describing them as generative, entrepreneurial gifts.

Participants learned that the websites of Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA list more than 80 pastoral openings, with about half being half-time positions. Kay Nussbaum, facilitator for the gathering and a leadership consultant from Minneapolis, reported that approximately half the congregations in the North American Mennonite denominations have fewer than 150 members, so they also may struggle to pay full-time salaries for pastors.

Several pastors affirmed the concern that immigrant congregations have difficulty paying full-time pastoral salaries. Madeline Maldonado explained that her congregation, Iglesia Evangelica Menonita Arca de Salvación, Fort Myers, Fla., has members who are migrant workers. "Their income isn't that much, and most of them tithe to their home churches in their countries."

Participants considered four options for effective and sustainable models to prepare leaders for a changing church: an intensive summer institute, congregational- or community-based learning centers, a certificate program and a new concentration in an already existing Master of Divinity degree. Vision, content, delivery methods, time frames and other factors were suggested for AMBS and the mission agencies to consider.

Approximately half the congregations in the North American Mennonite denominations have fewer than 150 members.

Phil Bontrager, CEO of Sauder Manufacturing, Archbold, Ohio, and member of the listening committee, noted "an authentic desire to be grounded in a deep theological center."

Anna Geyer, a participant from Kalona, Iowa, who has started several businesses on her farm, reported from one group discussion: "Could there be a curriculum on the road where we collaborate among our institutions so the colleges, seminaries and other organizations could take education to places within the Mennonite church that need the training but cannot access the seminary very well?"

Recommendations and counsel included an invitation by Jim Miller, former pastor and now a business leader from Sarasota, Fla., to think in ways that redefine what is important for biblically grounded, entrepreneurial leaders. Another recommendation was to build partnerships with immigrant churches, reading the Bible with them and learning to be bilingual, intercultural, church-planting social entrepreneurs.

Tim Froese, representing Mennonite Church Canada Witness, said, "In so many of your stories there was a spark or two of God's touch … that moved you in a direction that was further nurtured by bumps and bruises and mentors and education. It didn't start with the school or the business; it was that imperceptible touch. Where does that spark come from?"—*Mary E. Klassen of AMBS*

Boko Haram overruns Nigerian Brethren headquarters

Church of the Brethren calls for international attention to crisis in Nigeria.

The world has followed the tragic abduction of more than 200 schoolgirls from Chibok, Nigeria. Yet that tragedy is just one incident in an increasingly bloody attempt by Boko Haram insurgents to make northeast Nigeria into an Islamic caliphate.

Caught in the middle is Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), the largest Christian denomination in the area of northeast Nigeria where Boko Haram is taking territory. This year, EYN has seen many of its churches and congregations destroyed, as thousands of church members have been killed and pastors and their families have been among the hundreds more people abducted since the Chibok schoolgirls were taken. Most of the schoolgirls were from EYN. Estimates are that more than 90,000 EYN church members have been displaced by the fighting this year.

Now the situation of EYN is dire, as its headquarters property and Kulp Bible College have been taken by Boko Haram. The attack on the headquarters on Oct. 29 occurred as Boko Haram fighters were on their way to attack and take the nearby city of Mubi, near the Cameroon border.

People living at the EYN headquarters fled for their lives, including families of denominational staff and Bible college students. It is believed that most of those at the EYN headquarters escaped alive, but many people in Mubi and surrounding villages were killed, and others are now trapped in the control of Boko Haram.

The EYN staff is now displaced, and the church leadership is working to regroup. They are faced with the prospect of having to rebuild church offices and relocate staff and their families, at the same time the church continues to aid thousands of members who have been displaced. In addition, hundreds of pastors who were serving churches in the conflict zone also are displaced without jobs or means to provide for families.

The Rev. Dr. Samuel Dante Dali, president of EYN, is calling for urgent help from the international community for the people affected by violence in northeast Nigeria. In a letter he sent to the Church of the Brethren in the United States last month, he also called for the Nigerian government to give serious attention to the suffering of the people

"We need urgent help from the international community if the global community can have compassion on us," he wrote in the email. "The future of Nigeria is getting darker and darker day by day, but Nigerian political leaders do not seem to take the suffering of the people seriously. The government of Nigeria with all its security seems weak and helpless in handling the crisis."

"Our hearts are broken about what's happening in Nigeria," says Stanley J. Noffsinger, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren in the United States. "However, we're not so overwhelmed by this horror that we have become inactive. We are making a bold response. The board of the Church of the Brethren has committed up to $1.5 million to a new relief effort in Nigeria, in cooperation with EYN."

The American church also is beginning a more concerted advocacy effort to bring international attention to the crisis in northeast Nigeria. The effort encourages nonviolent solutions, such as an international effort to cut off Boko Haram's weaponry and funding, and international humanitarian aid fo the hundreds of thousands of Nigerians who are internally displaced or are refugees in Cameroon and Niger. The Church of the Brethren calls for international pressure on the Nigerian government to better serve its people—those who have lost loved ones in the conflict, orphans, women who have been brutalized, men who have lost jobs and the means to support their families, those living in camps or sheltering with extended family elsewhere without the means for food, shelter, and medical care.

The relief work that the Church of the Brethren is helping to carry out with EYN already has begun, including providing food and supplies to the displaced and building temporary shelters at "care centers" in safer locations in central Nigeria, among other priorities that now include the relocation of the EYN offices and staff.

In 1923, Church of the Brethren members from the United States began the mission effort that led to the emergence of EYN as an indigenous African Christian church that, up until recent destruction wrought by the insurgency, was estimated to have an attendance of close to 1 million in Nigeria and has mission efforts in neighboring countries.

For more information about Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria and the Church of the Brethren mission in Nigeria, go to www.brethren.org/nigeria.—*Mennonite Church USA*

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WDC Reference Council talks congregational authority

Report from Hispanic leaders affirmed by Western District representatives.

According to the official count, 143 participants representing 29 Western District Conference (WDC) congregations gathered Nov. 15 at Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, Kan., to talk about polity in response to a resolution brought to the conference's delegate assembly in July by Rainbow Mennonite Church, Kansas City, Kan. That resolution calls for congregations being able to decide for themselves whether or not their pastor can perform same-sex covenant ceremonies.

The WDC Reference Council is a group that meets annually to advise WDC staff. WDC moderator Richard Gehring, who is pastor at Manhattan (Kan.) Mennonite Fellowship, explained that it is not a decision-making body but seeks to promote dialogue and provide information to WDC congregations.

At the July assembly, delegates agreed to put off voting on the resolution from Rainbow until next year's assembly, which is now scheduled for October 2015. They also appointed a discernment task force, which sent out a survey to all WDC members. WDC leaders decided to use this reference council—and another one next April—to talk about issues related to the resolution.

Discernment task force report: Jim Schrag, chair of the discernment task force, summarized the results of the survey, which he acknowledged was not scientific. Instead, he said, it "helps form a general portrait of WDC self-understanding."

One of the questions the survey tried to address was, Who can decide what about matters of faith and practice? Schrag said. The survey looked at four areas related to this question: (1) statements from or about the *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* (COF), (2) Mennonite Church USA Membership Guidelines, (3) polity and unity, and (4) views of same-sex relationships.

Schrag noted that the survey showed that about half the respondents agree that COF is a "standard for judging faithfulness." And a large majority agree that Scripture is an "authoritative voice and standard" for discerning truth from error.

The survey also showed strong support for conferences having discretion to determine practices, Schrag said, while over half the respondents opposed the disciplining of pastors who perform same-sex covenant ceremonies, and over half said that performing these is like previous changes in the church, such as acceptance of divorce and women in leadership.

"There is clearly a shift going on in views of homosexuality and marriage," Schrag said.

In terms of polity and unity, Schrag reported that over 80 percent of respondents agree that WDC should be in relationship with Mennonite Church USA, and two-thirds say unity is not uniformity. Two-thirds also believe WDC unity can be preserved if congregations are allowed to choose different practices.

Statement by Hispanic church leaders: Gilberto Flores, who associate conference minister for WDC, reported on meetings he has had with Hispanic leaders in WDC congregations. Flores said that these leaders said three things: (1) they don't want to leave WDC, (2) they obviously disagree with same-sex relationships, and (3) they want to express their own views about love, unity, communion and the reason for the church to exist.

These leaders, Flores said, don't want to talk about the issue of same-sex relationships anymore. They will not try to change churches who want to be more welcoming, and they don't want to be judged by others. If WDC organizes its assemblies around issues of disagreement, they said, they don't want to participate. They want to focus on the things we agree on, Flores said.

Table groups: Reference Council participants met in table groups and discussed the results of the survey. In reporting to the larger group, two of the table groups said they felt the statement from the Hispanic churches showed leadership for how to proceed.

Later, the groups discussed the strengths and hazards of congregationalism. One table reported that the tension between congregational autonomy and a conference-led approach was "necessary for a healthy church." Several said that some balance of both is good, combining some guidelines with local autonomy. Another suggested the need for managing polarities, focusing not on our fears but on what is good in both systems.—*Gordon Houser*

Laurie Oswald Robinson

Brett Klingenberg (left) and Janet McGillivary discuss a question.

Speakers address Mennonite Church USA colleges

Sawatsky, Abuelaish and Hauerwas speak at Bethel, EMU and Bluffton.

What North American Mennonites can and should learn from the world

Although the title "Going Global with God" might have implied the topic of Christian mission to the world, Menno Simons lecturer Walter Sawatsky took it in a different direction.

Walter Sawatsky

Sawatsky, professor emeritus of church history and mission at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Ind., was the speaker for the annual series Oct. 26-28 at Bethel College in North Newton, Kan.

Sawatsky was "returning to a theme touched on in these lectures before," said John Thiesen, Bethel co-director of libraries and lecture series organizer, introducing Sawatsky, "understanding Mennonite Christianity from a global perspective."

Sawatsky gives "a persistent challenge to us as students and to the church to look beyond our own North American culture for light and for truth," said Mark Jantzen, Bethel professor of history, in his introduction to a later lecture.

Or, as Sawatsky stated, "Why telling the story from a global perspective matters."

He went on, "Since the Mennonite world assembly in 2009 in Paraguay, it's become rather trendy [among Mennonites] to speak of 'the global church,' having in mind only the Mennonites or perhaps only the Anabaptists.

"The church that came into being at Pentecost was described as being 'the body of Christ,' and that's what 'global church' must refer to. Are we really still thinking that only our little body constitutes 'the global church'?"

He devoted much of his first lecture to a historical sketch of the Russian Mennonite experience in the late 19th and early 20th century "as a paradigm."

The story he referred to most, however, was not the one many North American Mennonites know—the 1874-78 migration west of Mennonites from what is now Ukraine to the Great Plains of Canada and the United States, what Sawatsky called "a remarkable logistical achievement."

But theirs is "the minority story," he said. "The majority actually ended up deported to central Asia and Siberia, where they were repressed and forcibly repatriated, the means by which Soviet authorities were trying to crush religious belief."

In Sawatsky's second lecture, he referred to the Last Supper, as recorded in John, where Jesus prayed for his disciples: "that they may be one ... that the world might believe."

Yet in 2014, Sawatsky went on, "there were 40,000 'bodies' around the world not relating to each other—Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox. How much reconciliation do we still have to do?"

In the third lecture, Sawatsky returned to his theme of "what North American Mennonites can learn from the globa church."

"The global contextualization of the gospel had changed much," he said. "The 'sins taught by the missionaries' are not the ones of most importanc [in the developing world]." Rather than sin as reflected in the Ten Commandments, for example, what needs to be addressed more immediately ar such things as poverty, economic disparities, soci injustice and political repression.

In his concluding lecture, Sawatsky moved from Russian Mennonite and worldwide Christia mission paradigms to what could be learned from the peacemaking efforts of secular bodies around the world.

"How we frame our histories, how we frame our failures and recoveries, matters. To tell and teach Mennonite histor without reference to the others, except that 'those others did bad things to us,' is to sustain a lie."—*Melanie Zuercher of Bethel College*

Peacebuilding through a medical lens

In his book *I Shall Not Hate*, Izzeldin Abuelaish traces his journey from an impoverished childhood in the Gaza Strip to medical school in Egypt and eventually, in the face of enormous barriers, to become the first Palestinian doctor on the staff of an Israeli hospital. The book also describes his commitment to peacebuilding in Gaza, Israel and beyond—a commitment that was improbably deepened afte three of his daughters and a niece died when his house was shelled by Israeli tanks in 2009.

During a Nov. 4-5 visit to Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va., Abuelaish shared what he described a a "message of hope and of justice" that views peacebuilding through a medical lens.

Izzeldin Abuelaish

"The unit structure of our body is the cell. If one cell is sick, the whole body will react. My peace is linked to your peace. I am not in peace as long a others are not," said Abuelaish during his Suter Science Seminar speech, arguing that seemingly distant violent conflict affects everyone in the world.

In a separate interview, Abuelaish also used medical language to prescribe a first step people can take to address conflict elsewhere in the world.

"We need to dig deeper to find out the root causes of the problem," he said. "As in medicine, we … learn the history in order to reach accurate diagnosis. Accurate diagnosis is the light, is the truth, which helps us set up the right treatment and not to be stereotyped or deceived or misinformed anymore. That's what is important, the first step."

An obstetrician and gynecologist by training, Abuelaish is now an associate professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto. He also oversees the Daughters for Life Foundation, which was established in the memory of his three daughters to provide scholarships to women from the Middle East. Abuelaish is a vocal advocate for women's education and empowerment to become "agents of change in our world."

For several years, students supported by Daughters for Life have been studying at universities in Gaza, Israel and several other Middle Eastern countries, and in August, five women from the region began studying at the New College of Florida. During his visit to campus, Abuelaish expressed interest in a partnership that would send students from Daughters for Life to study at EMU, and met with President Loren Swartzendruber to discuss the possibility.

"I lost my daughters but I didn't lose hope," Abuelaish said. "I am here because of hope … [but] hope is not just a word … it needs someone to carry it, to believe in it, to move forward with it. Everything starts small. Start doing it. Others will follow you. Don't wait for others. You need to start for yourself."—*Andrew Jenner of EMU*

Remember the poor, says noted theologian

Stanley Hauerwas suggests that the apostles' request for Paul to remember the poor should be at the heart of Christian living.

"Care for the poor was thought by Paul to be a necessary hallmark of the corporate life of Jesus' followers," said Hauerwas, theological ethics chair at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, Nov. 10 at Bluffton (Ohio) University.

Hauerwas, a professor emeritus at Duke University Divinity School and named "America's Best Theologian" by *Time* magazine in 2001, delivered the annual Keeney Peace Lecture at Bluffton.

While he suggests that charity is central to the Christian faith, the intentions and effectiveness of charitable giving are often broadly challenged. "Almsgiving is indicative of what it means to be a Christian, yet how Christians have cared for those who have had less has recently come under severe criticism," he told the audience.

Stanley Hauerwas

"We seem to be living in a time where people have lost confidence in giving," which can be attributed to four criticisms of charity, Hauerwas said.

The first criticism is that poor planning causes aid to be ineffective in helping the poor. "Money is simply thrown at the problem with little idea of how the money could best used to make a positive response to a definite need," he elaborated.

But even when the aid is properly planned, charitable giving can still be panned as an inherently negative process. "Aid creates dependency, and those who receive that aid cannot be easily rectified," he said, paraphrasing the criticism.

The third criticism of charity is that it cannot actually fix poverty. "Aid simply is a bandage on a wound that is much deeper than aid can address" and cannot overcome unjust global economic structures, he said. "Globalization is but another name for capitalism in which those who have can continue to have, and those who do not have can do little to counter the power of the haves."

Finally, some people believe the practice of almsgiving is just not designed to work in our world. It is said that "the bottom line is, the poor got left out of the development of advanced economies, and there is little one can do to rectify that reality," Hauerwas said.

Even disaster relief efforts are criticized by some as convenient ways for developed countries to pursue imperialist goals in other countries, leaving charity works in other nations to feel like "agents of foreign policy," he said.

But amid the doom and gloom of charitable giving, Hauerwas believes that charity is an intrinsic part of Christian life that is rooted more deeply than acts of kindness.

For him, charity is an act of giving to God—like an act of worship—as much as it is an act of giving to those in need. "In Proverbs 19:17, we're told whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord and will be repaid in full by the Lord," he said. "To give to the poor is not just another act of charity but an encounter with God."

And because charity brings us closer to God, it is for every Christian, not just the well-off, Hauerwas said.

"Indeed, it is particularly important that Christians who are poor understand that they, too, must be charitable. To be poor does not mean to lack the means to expend charity to another. You may lack money or food, but you have the gift of friendship to overcome the loneliness that hits the lives of so many," he told the audience.

To begin helping the poor effectively, Hauerwas calls Christians to practice the discipline of listening as part of their worship. "We must listen to the stories that the poor have to tell, because only by listening to such stories will we have the means to know how to go on," he said.

"It is crucial to remember that for the church, the care of the poor cannot be separated from our worship of God. Worship makes possible, I hope to suggest, that Christians have the time to be with the poor, but even more strongly, Christians can imagine being poor," he said.—*Chay Reigle of Bluffton University*

It matters how we disagree

How to do nonviolent communication in a peace church

Throughout his life and ministry, Jesus both modeled and called his followers to a life of nonviolence. The Mennonite faith tradition takes this call seriously. Our commitment to nonviolence has guided many generations' response to military service and witness to justice and peace. Here, nonviolence takes an outward direction, from the church toward the world. But as we now find our church in a time of discernment that can involve disagreement, our distinctive peace witness is at stake.

Our *Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective* reminds us that our core value of nonviolence is not only a witness to the outside world but fundamental to our life together in the church. "Led by the Spirit, and *beginning in the church*, we witness to all people that violence is not the will of God [emphasis added]." If the church is indeed the first place where believers witness to nonviolence, then nonviolent communication can help shape the way we treat one another in the church. Even where disagreement is inevitable, it matters how we disagree.

While disagreeing, people naturally express their values and feelings with passion. Anxiety rises when we sense a threat to our values or identity. Sometimes, however, words can come across in a violent manner as we express heartfelt convictions. We may react quickly, responding out of fear rather than faith. I am troubled when I hear comments such as, "Have you forgotten Christ's call to justice?" or, "You don't believe the gospel" within our church. Is there a way we can disagree and hear one another with respect and compassion?

If the church is indeed the first place where believers witness to nonviolence, then nonviolent communication can help shape the way we treat one another in the church.

Violent communication is at play when we speak to one another with the sole purpose of judging who is right and who is wrong. This usually means we are trying to prove ourselves right and the other wrong. Whenever someone—be it an individual or a group—uses their power over others to win at their expense, harm is done. In this way, communal discernment in the church can become violent when demands and judgments are made. Contrary to the ol saying, sticks and stones may break our bones, but words d hurt us. In reflecting on the disagreement I see throughout Mennonite Church USA, I am grieved when I hear our witness to nonviolence undermined by the way we speak to on another.

What about Jesus' teaching on accountability and the historic use of "the ban" in the Anabaptist tradition? How do we honor both our commitment to nonviolence and our cor convictions? Jesus rejects judging others (Matthew 7:1-5) but also teaches about holding one another accountable in the faith community (Matthew 18:15-20). These are not mutually exclusive.

For example, in this article I am seeking to hold us in Mennonite Church USA accountable to our core value of nonviolence without adding more violence to the conversation by judging people with whom I disagree. I try to avoid language that accuses or attacks, seeking instead to write in an invitational manner.

How we disagree matters. When we show compassion we aim to understand the other's experience and connect with them through empathy. As we interact nonviolently, w may even be able to recognize in someone else the same needs and values that we ourselves cherish.

Simply keeping silent about what really matters is not th answer to disagreement, either. In reflecting on my own approach to conflict, I told my seminary professor I tend to remain silent for the sake of the peace of the church. She challenged me, "Is it true peace if you still carry the conflict inside you?"

Using this approach, I may avoid outer conflict but at a great cost to my inner self. When we suppress our true feelings, we do not move closer to unity with our brothers and sisters; rather, we may harbor resentment. When conflicts (whether inner or outer) are not fully addressed, we damag the integrity of ourselves and our community.

Nonviolent communication (NVC), developed by Marshall Rosenberg, offers a way for us within a peace church t love our neighbors as ourselves. It provides tools for managing conflict, focusing on the underlying needs and values that lead to intense feelings. The NVC process guides us in a compassionate flow of communication, based on observations, feelings, needs or values, and requests:

- We make observations that affect our well-being. We describe what we see others doing without labeling or judging their behavior.
- We state our feelings about what we observe. We own these feelings rather than accusing others of making us feel that way.

- We express the core needs or values that create our feelings. We share what we need or value, which the other person's behavior may bring to light but does not cause.
- We make requests (not demands) that will enrich our life. We ask for clear, concrete actions from the other person. (Or we become aware of how we'd like to change our own behavior, in which case we make a request of ourselves).

When we suppress our true feelings, we do not move closer to unity with our brothers and sisters; rather, we may harbor resentment.

The NVC process gives careful attention to how observations, feelings, needs and requests are expressed. NVC is much more than making "I" statements. Consider, for example, if someone were to disagree by saying, "Because you don't take the Bible seriously, I feel like you aren't a true Christian. I need you to believe the real message of the gospel. Please consider God's truth instead." One can only imagine that the person on the receiving end of this comment would feel angry or defensive. Let's try using NVC to break this statement down and uncover its underlying violence, then rebuild it in a nonviolent way.

Observations. "Because you don't take the Bible seriously." While this may seem like the speaker is describing what he/she sees, it is actually a judgment. The speaker is judging the way the other person reads and interprets the Bible.

Feelings. "I feel like you aren't a true Christian." When a statement about what one feels includes the word "you," it is a red flag that another judgment is being expressed. Feelings are about us, not the other person. Here again, the speaker is judging the status of the other person's faith.

Needs. "I need you to believe the real message of the gospel." Again, a statement of what we need should not include the word "you." This sounds more like a demand than a need or a value. The speaker is also making a judgment that he or she knows the real message of the gospel, and the other does not.

Requests. "Please consider God's truth instead." While this may be a request, it is a violent one. The speaker is implying that he or she knows God's truth and the other does not. Requests should be made in a way that respects the other person, not tears them down.

How might some of the same ideas be shared nonviolently? I can imagine this conversation happening without violence if the speaker would say, "When you cite biblical references for your point of view (observation), I feel uneasy (feeling) because I've always understood the Bible to say something different. I value a different kind of biblical interpretation (value). Would you be willing to listen to my perspective and then share how you came to another understanding (request)?"

Mennonites have a distinctive peace witness that the world desperately needs, but we in the church need it, too.

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Another key part of NVC is listening. After we have shared our observations, feelings, needs and requests, we listen as the other person responds. Rather than thinking about what we will say next, we are fully present and listen carefully for their core needs and values even if they are not spoken outright. What is at stake for the other? What really matters to him or her? Although we may have different ways of meeting these needs or living out these values, we connect with the other's heart when we understand their needs, values and desires. We repeat back what we hear, asking questions to make sure we fully understand. It makes all the difference in the world when those disagreeing feel they have been heard, valued and understood.

Throughout the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus calls his followers to a higher righteousness. In the Sermon on the Mount, long regarded by Anabaptist-Mennonites as the capstone of Jesus' teaching, Jesus expands the law and the prophets by shifting each command from the visible to the invisible. Among many things, Jesus renounces anger, retaliation, hatred of enemies and a judgmental spirit. He explains, "All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted" (Matthew 23:12). This can shape how we speak to one another in the church. Compassion and humility are essential for our communication.

After people in conflict have shared and truly heard one another in a respectful manner, they may still find themselves holding different beliefs. This is OK; NVC does not expect everyone to agree. Members of Mennonite Church USA will continue to disagree, and some may even determine they can no longer belong to the same denomination. But throughout the process, we all can continue to witness with integrity that violence is not the will of God. We can affirm our commitment to nonviolence by expressing our observations, feelings, needs or values, and requests, then compassionately hear others share their own. Mennonites have a distinctive peace witness that the world desperately needs, but we in the church need it, too. It really matters how we disagree.

Sarah Ann Bixler has served throughout Mennonite Church USA in education, youth ministry, curriculum writing, church planting and conference leadership. She is a Master of Divinity student at Princeton (N.J.) Theological Seminary.

To learn more about nonviolent communication, read *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* by Marshall Rosenberg (PuddleDancer Press, 2003) or *Transforming Church Conflict: Compassionate Leadership in Action* by Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger and Theresa Latini (Westminster John Knox Press, 2013).

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Mennonite Central Committee

Keeping children and youth safe

Dove's Nest holds first annual conference and worship gathering

Dove's Nest's first annual "Protecting Our Children and Youth Conference and Worship Gathering" took place Nov. 7-9 in Omaha, Neb. The theme verse was, "How steadfast is your unfailing love, O God! All your children take refuge in the shadow of your wings."

Keynote speaker Deondra Brown, cofounder of The Foundation for Survivors of Abuse, told her story of surviving and thriving after being sexually abused by her father. Brown shared how spiritual leaders in her local faith community walked with her through the difficult early days after confronting her father and continued to support her as she found her way on the path to healing. She also discussed legislative efforts to eliminate statute-of-limitation laws so that abuse survivors have the option to seek prosecution on their own timeline if they so choose.

Seven breakout sessions equipped pastors and faith communities to prevent child abuse and keep children safe. Additional sessions offered training on the Circle of Grace safe environment curriculum (available at no cost to Mennonite Church USA congregations), procedures to help a faith community be accountable to its child and youth protection policies, and a discussion of ways in which the peace position may increase vulnerability to abuse. The conference also included times of networking and worship.

Dove's Nest began within Mennonite Church USA and now has a national board comprised of Mennonites and members of other denominations. Two staff members lead the organization's day-to-day work. More than 500 Mennonite Church USA congregations or affiliated organizations have received a free copy of the *Circle of Grace* safe environment curriculum, and more than 100 congregations have participated in a Dove's Nest training event. "It's exciting and fulfilling to realize the impact we are having and the new places we are now reaching," says Jon Stanton, executive director. "We have sent several copies of *Circle of Grace* to Spanish-speaking churches in the United States and overseas and have conducted training in Spanish as well."

Since the "Protecting and Nurturing our Children and Youth" resolution was approved by delegates at the 2013 Convention, Dove's Nest (www.DovesNest.net) has continued to work with Mennonite Church USA leaders to help congregations implement its recommedations.—*Dove's Nest*

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CALENDAR

Fairlawn Haven Auxiliary Open House and Auction, Founder's Hall, Archbold, Ohio, March 26-27, 2015.

WORKERS

Benedict, Neal, was licensed as associate pastor of Erisman Mennonite Church, Manheim, Pa., on Nov. 2.

Elkins, Scott, was installed as lead pastor at Old Road Mennonite Church, Gap, Pa., on Oct. 26.

Gusler, Todd, was installed as lead pastor of Rossmere Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa., on Nov. 16.

McQuitty, Ryan, was licensed as associate pastor for youth ministry of Mount Joy Mennonite Church, Mount Joy, Pa., on Oct. 26.

Prins, Andres, was licensed for local and global outreach at Groffdale Mennonite Church, Leola, Pa., on Oct. 12.

OBITUARIES

Delagrange, James L., 71, Woodburn, Ind., died Sept. 21, of cancer. Spouse: Marie Eicher Delagrange. Parents: Joseph and Anna Delagrange. Children: Jeff, Jayne Delagrange Newala, Melissa Freehling, Mike; 11 grandchildren. Funeral: Sept. 26 at North Leo Mennonite Church, Leo, Ind.

Eigsti, Mervin Jacob, 83, Denver, Colo., died Oct. 29 of Lewy Body Disease. Spouse: Ardith Eigsti. Parents: Emery and Edna Wenger Eigsti. Children: Stan, Becky Widmer, Randy Landis-Eigsti, Brad; nine grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 8 at Glennon Heights Mennonite Church, Lakewood, Colo.

Fisher, Midred H., 92, Belleville, Pa., died Oct. 9. Parents: Christian K. and Minnie S. Stoltzfus Fisher. Children: Violet J. Metzler; three grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 13 at Millwood Mennonite Church, Gap, Pa.

Gingrich, Blanche E. Kreider, 87, Landisville, Pa., died Sept. 25. Spouse: John M. Gingrich. Parents: Edison and Mary Gingrich. Children: Donald, Ann Martin, David, Nelson, Kenneth, Sharon Umble, Beverly Kerry; 15 grandchildren; 21 great-grandchildren; one great-great-grandchild. Funeral: Oct. 4 at Landisville Mennonite Church.

Gingerich, Frances A. Helmuth, 74, Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 31. Spouse: Alton "Al" Gingerich. Parents: Alvin and Mary Miller Helmuth. Children: Darrell, Lloyd, Steven; six grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 5 at Walnut Hill Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Groff, Weyburn W., 92, Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 2. Spouse: Thelma Miller Groff (deceased). Parents: Simeon and Violet Snyder Groff. Children: Raechel White, Margaret Groff, Cheryl Groff Hess, Ed; three grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 11 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Holaway, Barbara J. Thut, 81, Elkhart, Ind., died Oct. 2. Spouse: LaMar Holaway. Parents: Ira and Dorothy Yoder Thut. Children: Brian, Brent, Bruce; five grandchildren; two great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 10 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen, Ind.

Hostetler, David E., 84, Reinholds, Pa., died Oct. 27. Spouse: Rosanna Yoder Hostetler. Parents: Emerson and Luella Lehman Hostetler. Children: D. Michael, J. Marcos, James D., Marcella Hostetler, Mo ica Harnish; 13 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 1 at Scottda Mennonite Church, Scottdale, Pa.

Hostetler, Eldon E., 87, Milford, Neb., died Oct. 12 of a stroke. Spouse: Eileen Ehrman Hostetler. Parents: Elbert and Cla Burkey Hostetler. Children: Bonnie Hostetler, Roger, Marcia Van Andel; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 16 at Bellwood Mennonite Church, Milford.

King, Lois I. Zook, 94, Belleville, Pa., died Oct. 12. Spouse: Mark S. King (deceased). Parents: Frank and Sadie Stoltzfu Zook. Children: Larry M., Karen S. Zook. Funeral: Oct. 15 at Maple Grove Mennonite Church, Belleville.

Lehman, Alice B. Bachman, 102, Castorland, N.Y., died Nov. 6. Spouse: Norma Lehman (deceased). Parents: Joseph C. ar Barbara M. Virkler Bachman. Children: James, Sanford B., Clifford B., Geneva Virkler, Janice Crofoot, Janet Tuley; Elsie McElheran; 19 grandchildren; 27 great-grandchildren. Funeral: Nov. 11 at First Mennonite Church, New Bremen, N.Y.

Lilley, Charles Leslie, 57, Telford, Pa., died Sept. 19. Spouse: Terri S. Lilley. Parents: Charles C. and Shirley Ann Lilley. Ch dren: Chatham, Derrick; five grandchildre Funeral: Sept. 26 at Salford Mennonite Church, Harleysville, Pa.

For the Record is available to members of Mennonite Church USA. Births and marriages appear online at www.themennonite.org. Obituaries are also published in *The Mennonite*. Contact Rebecca Helmuth at 800-790-2498 for expanded memorial and photo insertion options. To submit information, log on to www.themennonite.org and use the "For the Record" button for online forms. You may also submit information by email, fax or mail: Editor@TheMennonite.org; fax 316-283-0454; 3145 Benham Ave., Suite 4, Elkhart, IN 46517.

Shirk, Frank E., 89, Leola, Pa., died Oct. 8. Spouse: Erica Hege Shirk. Parents: Peter N. and Joanna H. Shirk. Children: Louise Longenecker, Sylvia Shirk, Hilda Shirk, Ed Shirk, Eric Shirk, Mim Shirk, Peter Shirk, Dorothy Shirk, Philip Shirk; 18 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 14 at New Holland Mennonite Church, New Holland, Pa.

Smucker, Marcus G., 82, Lititz, Pa., died Oct. 29. Spouse: Dorothy Wenger Smucker. Parents: John and Anna Stoltzfus Smucker. Children: Deb Smucker, Greg; two grandchildren. Celebration-of-life service: Nov. 1 at Mellinger Mennonite Church, Lancaster, Pa.

Springer, Ralph, 88, Hopedale, Ill., died Oct. 12. Spouse: Clarabell GarberSpringer. Parents: Aaron J. and Naomi M. Atkins Springer. Children: Mike, Ted, Jan Rheinheimer, Pat Shoemaker, Peggy Reese; seven grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 18 at Hopedale Mennonite Church.

Steider, Dorcas A. Miller, 72, Goshen, Ind., died Oct. 11. Spouse: Don Steider (deceased). Parents: Lester and Mary Holaway Miller. Children: Dawn Summerton, Deidre Bias; step-children: Janell Harris, Bryan Steider, Brendan Steider; eight grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 14 at College Mennonite Church, Goshen.

Strauss, Lyle Keith, 66, Nappanee, Ind., died March 15 of cancer. Spouse: Blondine J. Jost Strauss. Parents: Lewis Leroy "Roy" and Pearl Hochstetler Strauss. Children: Karen Strauss Nichols, Keith Jerel Strauss; two grandchildren. Funeral: March 18 at First Mennonite Church, Nappanee.

Trucksess, Joan Shirley Workman, 79, Telford, Pa., died Oct. 20, of cancer. Spouse: Robert Lane Trucksess. Parents: Andrew and Esther Duckloe Workman. Children: Kurt Von Trucksess; three grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 25 at Franconia Mennonite Church, Telford.

Zehr, Robert "Boomer" L., 84, New Bremen, N.Y., died Oct. 24. Spouse: Arletha M. Archer Zehr. Parents: Reuben Zehr and Marion Lehman Zehr Grau. Children: Lynn R., Jill Hoch, Lisa Lee, Jack; four grandchildren; three great-grandchildren. Funeral: Oct. 27 at First Mennonite Church, New Bremen.

TMail

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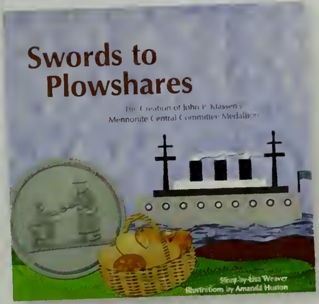
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Christmas Greetings from The Mennonite staff

RESOURCES

Practicing Christian Doctrine: An Introduction to Thinking and Living Theologically by Beth Felker Jones (BakerAcademic, 2014, $22.99) takes an evangelical and ecumenical approach to doctrine and emphasizes the importance of practicing what Christians affirm to be true. It affirms evangelical theology while drawing on the tradition offered by other voices and movements in the global church.

Presence and Encounter: The Sacramental Possibilities of Everyday Life by David G. Benner (Brazos Press, 2014, $15.99) provides a simple but profound guide to experiencing the presence of Christ (even in absence) in everyday life. Benner approaches discipleship from the perspective of depth psychology.

The Drama of Living: Becoming Wise in the Spirit by David F. Ford (Brazos Press, 2014, $19.99) offers insights into living wisely in the Spirit in a culture of distraction, in the middle of complex situations, relationships, responsibilities, ongoing dramas and challenges.

Taste the New Wine: It Will Change Your Life by Bernie Loeppky (EAF, 2014, $10) is a 33-lesson interactive study of the Sermon on the Mount designed for individual study, small groups and young adult/adult Sunday school classes. Developed in an adult Sunday school class at Grace Mennonite Church in Winkler, Manitoba, it is available from EAF, Box 323, Winkler, MB R6W 4A5 Canada, or contact eafellowship@gmail.com. The cost does not include shipping and handling.

Dear Abba: Morning and Evening Prayer by Brennan Manning with John Blase (Eerdmans, 2014, $10) lays out a month of honest, poignant prayers to God—whom Manning affectionately calls "Abba"—in a devotional format designed to guide and inspire the reader's own prayers. Each entry presents a Scripture passage, an excerpt from Manning's books and a prayer. The book was completed shortly before Manning's death in April 2013.

Beginning with the Word: Modern Literature and the Question of Belief by Roger Lundin (BakerAcademic, 2014, $24.99) explores modern literature's endless wrestling with Christian witness and biblical narrative with thoughtfulness, passion and personal commitment.

Straw and All: A Christmas Poetry Collection by Ruth Naylor (WorkPlay Publishing, 2014, $12.99) contains many poems that have been published in *The Mennonite* over the years. The poems were written during the Christmas seasons between 1969 and 2013.

Are you gifted in sharing a relevant Anabaptist vision inspiring to the church today? **Blooming Glen Mennonite Church** (www.bgmc.net) is seeking a dynamic and dedicated **lead pastor** with strong preaching and leadership skills. We are people on a journey with Jesus committed to growing together in a nurturing community of believers. Our congregation is located in Pennsylvania, halfway between Philadelphia and Allentown. Our weekly attendance is approximately 330. If you are interested in exploring the possibilities at Blooming Glen Mennonite Church, please visit the church website for details and email the search committee at bgmcpastorsearch@gmail.com.

First Mennonite Church, Vineland, Ontario, seeks a **full-time pastor** to lead our semirural congregation of 75 people in various stages of life. We are looking for someone with a strong commitment to Anabaptist values, a keen understanding of peace and social justice, and a love of music. We are the original Mennonite Church in Canada and have a rich history of leadership. If interested contact Henry Paetkau, MCEC Conference Minister. hpaetkau@mcec.ca.

Eastern Mennonite University seeks qualified applicants for an **assistant professor of chemistry** and **chemical hygiene officer**. Teaching load (18 SH) in the chemistry department as well as administrative load (6 SH) to develop and implement the chemical hygiene plan. Courses include chemistry, nonmajors chemistry, as well as upper level courses in the area of the candidates expertise. Doctorate in a field of chemistry. Previous safety training, knowledge and use of GHS, MSDS and experience in working with potentially hazardous materials. Position to begin in the 2015 academic year. Send letter of application, curriculum vitae, transcripts (unofficial acceptable at first), recent course evaluation (if applicable) and three letters of reference to: Tara Kishbaugh, Professor of Chemistry, Department Chair, Biology and Chemistry, Eastern Mennonite University, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802. For more information visit our website at www.emu.edu/humanresources. Persons who bring diversity are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Executive director. MHS Consulting, a national consulting practice that supports nonprofit organizations in their leadership and strategic direction, seeks an executive director to serve as a key leader in our mission to provide faith-grounded resources to Anabaptist and other Christian nonprofits. Responsibilities include leadership and development of the practice, as directed by the board and in alignment with the parent company, MHS. Proven ability to lead a mission-driven team, build a business and work within an Anabaptist perspective. MBA or related graduate degree preferred. Position requires significant travel and active engagement in serving members and clients. Send cover letter and resumé to hr@mhsonline.org or contact Rick Stiffney at rick@mhsonline.org.

Bluffton University invites applications for a **full-time tenure-track position in physics** to begin fall 2015. Ph.D. in experimental chemical-physics or experimental physics required. Ph.D. in related discipline will be considered. For position description visit www.bluffton.edu/employment. Review of applications begins Jan. 1, 2015, and continues until an appointment is made. Compensation is commensurate with education and experience within the university pay scale. Bluffton University welcomes applications from all academically qualified persons who respect the Anabaptist/Mennonite peace church position and endorse Christian higher education in a liberal arts environment. Members of underrepresented groups are encouraged to apply. EOE.

Anabaptist Disabilities Network (ADNet), a small nonprofit in Elkhart, Ind., seeks **half-time director**. ADNet is dedicated to transforming faith communities when individuals with disabilities enjoy full inclusion in the body of Christ. Director roles include donor development, overseeing office and staff, guiding organizational communications, relating to board of directors. Job description posted at www.adnetonline.org. Send resumé to becky.gascho@gmail.com.

Visit Europe the Mennonite Way! Multiple Hotel Tours focusing on Mennonite-Anabaptist history in Holland, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland, Poland and Ukraine. Organized by **Mennonite Heritage Tours**, www.mennoniteheritagetours.eu

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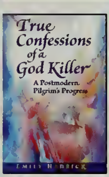
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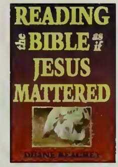
True Confessions of a God Killer: A Postmodern Pilgrim's Progress, Emily Hedrick. "Not for the faint of heart, this tale lures the reader off safe paths into utter darkness and then toward tantalizing glimpses of healing light." —*Marlene Kropf* 156p $14.95



Reading the Bible As If Jesus Mattered, Duane Beachey, who "issues a call to a radical discipleship that has always been countercultural and always will be. Jesus matters." —*Danny Duncan Collum* 166p $16.95

DISCOVERING Forgiveness
Pathways through Injury, Apology, & Healing
LARRY DUNN
Foreword by John Paul Lederach

Discovering Forgiveness: Pathways Through Injury, Apology, and Healing, Larry A. Dunn, who "offers a stream of provocative stories—of real people in honest conversations. These stories create a deep grounding in . . . how forgiveness emerges." —*John Paul Lederach* 122p $14.95

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Lessons Mrs. P taught me

Sherah-Leigh Gerber is director of advancement for Virginia Mennonite Missions. She lives with her husband and two young children in Harrisonburg, Va.

Tape measure in hand, I circled the oversized table crammed into a small dining area. Dutifully I measured the fabric hanging from each edge, ensuring that the worn vinyl table cloth was centered. I placed the two glass candlesticks on either side of the pinecone spray.

This level of attention to detail felt ridiculous. By this time in our relationship, Mrs. P was not able to get up from her bed to come and check if I had painstakingly measured (as apparently was her practice). But for four hours every Thursday afternoon, I was her charge, and I aimed to please. I didn't want to end up like the previous string of hospice volunteers who had been dismissed after a week or two for not being up to snuff.

Five years ago, after completing four months of training, I found myself standing on the slanted cement doorstep of a small ranch house in the middle of town. Nervous, I fiddled with my professional-looking name badge, waiting for someone to answer the door. Despite my pastoral care training, I wasn't sure what to expect behind the 1950s-era wooden door. From the volunteer coordinator's description of the assignment, I knew there was a challenge coming.

Don't sweat the small stuff—and most of it is small.

While my new friend was exacting in her requests, I realized we learned to know each other well over the weeks, having such a concentrated set of hours to share. In the beginning, I made meals, and she shuffled out to check that I'd cut the onion finely enough or to taste the seasoning in my sloppy joes. Each week, I washed the lunch dishes and tidied the kitchen before joining her for the daily soap opera. Sometimes I arranged the seasonal décor or altered her favorite slacks so they stayed on her shrinking frame.

Each week, after completing her list of chores, I settled into the padded chair in the corner of her bedroom and pulled a novel out of my bag. She assured me I should use the time to read, but after I turned a few pages, she struck up a conversation, wondering what I was cooking for dinner that night or what my weekend plans were.

I always tried to engage her, learning about her life and family. And as it turned out, the end wasn't so immanent for this dear soul. Our weekly ritual continued over many months. Whether she intended it or not, she was having a impact on my life.

Because my time with her overlapped with the holidays and because this is the time of year when I turn reflective and assess where I am in life and what hopes and dreams I have for the coming year, I pulled out my journal to remember the lessons Mrs. P shared with me as I witnessed her wrestling with the reality of losing physical abilities and dancing with death.

- No matter where you are in life, there is always greener grass. It's easy to see perks and benefits in others' lives. How can we cultivate a heart of gratitude for our present circumstances?
- The habits you cultivate over your lifetime will continue. It may become your legacy, so consider how you are who you are. There's no time like the present to be the kind of person you really want to be.
- Who you are is more important than what you do. You may not always have a career to define yourself, so keep working at being who you are called to be more than doing what you may choose to do. You identity will be with you no matter what title, role or position you hold or lose.
- Each day has its gifts and challenges. Find something to love about every day. You don't know how many you have, and you may have more than you think. How are you making the most of the time you do have?
- Invest in people. Enjoy your time with family You may not always be able to get together. Treasure the good times and savor the memory-making opportunities you do have. Strong relationships, dear friends and sweet memories can get you through many difficult things.
- When facing a terminal illness, ultimately, money can't buy your health. And having nice stuff won't make you feel better. Having a house full of stuff just leaves more for you to care for, sort through and give away. Money and possessions are great distractions, allowing for the illusion of control.
- Crisis brings perspective. Don't sweat the small stuff—and most of it is small. TM

FILM REVIEWS

Interstellar (PG-13) is an ambitious film about space exploration to find other habitable planets, since Earth's resources are running out. The film includes much information about wormholes, black holes, multidimensional reality and relativity, and its pacing is uneven—at times thrilling, at other times ponderous. The complex narrative may lose some viewers. It also gets sentimental in places and ties up things a bit too tidily.—*Gordon Houser*

Birdman, or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance) (R) is about a washed-up actor who 20 years earlier played a superhero called Birdman. Now he wants to be recognized as a serious artist by directing a play based on a Raymond Carver short story. Director Alejandro González Iñárritu's satire skewers blockbusters and theater while presenting some serious questions about our search for significance and recognition. Michael Keaton's performance is outstanding.—*gh*

BOOK REVIEWS

The Good of Politics: A Biblical, Historical and Contemporary Introduction by James W. Skillen (BakerAcademic, 2014, $22.99) argues that "the inauguration of God's kingdom in Christ neither dislodges nor disbands our human political vocation." Skillen considers the Bible and history, then looks at political engagement today. He dismisses pacifist social ethics and offers a conservative political theology.—*gh*

Liberty to the Captives: Our Call to Minister in a Captive World by Raymond Rivera (Eerdmans, 2012, $18) calls Christians to follow four principles of holistic ministry: liberation, healing, community and transformation. Rivera draws on Scripture and his many years of experience as a pastor. He is founder and president of the Bronx-based Latino Pastoral Action Center and worked in various churches and ministries in New York City.—*gh*

Mennonites in the news

Mennonites are a tiny percentage of the U.S. population and don't usually get much attention from the wider media.

In November, however, a couple of stories brought Mennonites to the attention of at least some secular media.

On page 35 of this issue, Anna Groff writes about the explosion in social media and beyond of interest in the story of Chester Wenger, a retired Mennonite pastor and missionary in Lancaster, Pa.

Groff describes the piece as going viral, which refers to a post getting massive attention.

Elise Moreau, a trends expert, writes that "countless articles and books have been written claiming to teach anyone how to create viral content that takes on a life of its own after it's sent out into the online world." But really, "nobody knows the secret formula."

In this case, we're left to guess what it is about this particular piece that drew so much attention.

Let me take a few stabs at guessing.

First, it's a story. Stories draw people more than arguments or diatribes. Granted, Chester Wenger includes lots of his personal opinion in the piece and makes an argument. But much of the piece is a narrative of his life and what led him to make the decision he did, which is itself an act, a part of a story.

Second, it's unusual, which is the definition of news. It goes against people's expectation to have a 96-year-old speak out for same-sex marriage.

Third, it's personal. It's first about a family and the love shared by its members, particularly that of a father and a son.

But in the end it's guesswork. You can have those elements in a dozen or a hundred other posts that don't get nearly that much attention.

Another item that got the attention of the secular media in November was the work of Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS). On Nov. 6, the *New York Times* published an article by Helene Stapinski called "After Catastrophes, Mennonite Disaster Service Helps to Rebuild."

The article tells the story of Karen Dougherty, whose home in Broad Channel, N.Y., was damaged two years ago by Hurricane Sandy.

To survive, she climbed into her attic crawl space. Now, two years later, MDS is finishing work on her house, making it livable again.

"People came and said they would help, took my money and then never came back," Dougherty says in the article. "But these people, they didn't ask for anything. These are strangers. And they're like lifesavers. I want to go home with them."

Mennonites have long been labeled "the quiet in the land"—and criticized for it, usually by ourselves. We want to make our faith known.

Here are two examples of that happening, to some degree. What are the elements of that witness?

One, again, is story. These two articles revolve around the actions of Mennonites. In one case, a man whose life exemplifies service takes an action that goes against church authorities and costs him something.

In the other, a group simply does what it's been doing for many decades, offering loving, caring service to people in need. The unique element is that, while many other groups show up initially after a disaster, few stick around for years to make sure people are back on their feet. MDS does that.

Perhaps we can learn from these two examples of getting attention from the wider media something about our witness to Christ's work among us.

Gordon Houser is associate editor of The Mennonite.

(Continued from page 5)

Recommends book

I urge all my faith sisters and brothers to please read *God and the Gay Christian* by Matthew Vines.

I recommend this book especially to those who see the church's movement toward fully welcoming our faith siblings of the LGBT community as (1) an obvious disregard for what the Bible teaches and (2) sinful behavior that faithful Jesus followers cannot support.

Vines makes a convincing case that Christians who affirm the full authority of Scripture can also affirm committed, monogamous same-sex relationships.

In simple, clear language, Vines addresses the six main biblical passages most often used by those whose convictions assure them that Bible-believing Christians must not (cannot) welcome into full fellowship people of the LGBT community—that to do so is to disobey God. Vines explains what the biblical language most probably communicated to its original readers.

Years of research and digging into recent scholarship that sheds light on the biblical passages stand behind his crisp language and powerful words.

Vines writes: "Like most theologically conservative Christians, I believe all of Scripture is inspired by God and authoritative for my life … [and] is 'useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness' (2 Timothy 3:16-17)."

Vines ends his introductory remarks with this: "My prayer is that it opens up a conversation in the Christian community that is truly in the spirit of Jesus. The fiercest objections to LGBT equality—those based on religious beliefs—can begin to fall away. The tremendous pain endured by LGBT youth in many Christian homes can become a relic of the past. Christianity's reputation in much of the Western world can begin to rebound. Together we can reclaim our light."

I sincerely wish the same for those in my faith family who read the book.
—*Twila Miller, Akron, Pa.*

Thanks for letters

Thank you for your recent publication of letters in support of individuals who are gay. I left the church in the '80s, in part because of the church's lack of female leadership support and in part because my friends and family who were openly gay were not able to join the "club" I felt the Mennonite church had become. Reading these letters has been enormously healing, as I know it must be for the individuals (including me and my Mennonite-raised husband) who have gay relatives and friends.

Thank you for letting these voices be heard. I know the Mennonite churc isn't for everyone. But for those who have left the church because of this issue, hearing the voices of those willing to share their story at least acknowledges pain that the Mennonite church has caused certain individuals and families and thus offers at least a window of opportunity for healing.
—*Cynthia Yoder, Princeton Junction, N.J.*

A proposed Anabaptist lectionary for 2015

by Myron Augsburger

Here is the first four weeks of a 52-week Anabaptist lectionary. To see the full year's lectionary, go to https://themennonite.org/feature/anabaptist-lectionary-for-2015/

Jan. 4: *If any want to become my followers, let him deny themselves and take up their cross …*—Luke 9:23-26

Anabaptists had a strong emphasis on discipleship, on walking with Jesus in faith. When one is converted to Christ rather than simply to church, the next question is how one understands and follows Christ Jesus in life. Discipleship is not a legalism but a relational faith.

11: *If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.*—John 8:31-38

Anabaptists witnessed that the new life in Christ is a life of inner freedom, a release from being dominated by sin, but they affirmed that this was not perfectionism. This inner release in grace stood in contrast to a works righteousness of religious exercises. We need to discover how to behave our beliefs as a walk in the Spirit.

18: *If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation.*—2 Corinthians 5:15-17

Menno had a strong emphasis on the new birth as a new life in the Spirit. He was converted as a priest after a 10-year struggle. In 1536, he found peace in Christ. This emphasis as well as that of the believers' church marked his preaching.

25: *The one who believes and is baptized will be saved.*—Mark 16:14-20, Acts 2:37-42

Felix Manz of Zurich strongly emphasized believer's baptism. He died as a martyr on Jan. 5, 1527, by being drowned in the Limmat River in Zurich. As a prominent evangelist, in and out of prison, he was faithful to the death.

Myron Augsburger is an evangelist in Harrisonburg, Va.

As a prominent evangelist, in and out of prison, Felix Manz was faithful to the death.

A matter of conscience

Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day."—Acts 23:1, TNIV

Several times in his letters to churches, the Apostle Paul spoke of the importance of conscience. He voiced the intent to live with a clear conscience and to protect the consciences of others.

Not that it made his life easy. His comment to the Sanhedrin, cited in Acts, caused the high priest Ananias to order him struck on the mouth for his impudence. Paul fired back a rebuke to the insult, then apologized for having spoken against a ruler of his people.

Martin Luther, the 16th-century reformer, made a major impact on church history with a declaration of conscience. He vowed to a council not unlike the Sanhedrin of Paul's day: "I consider myself convicted by the testimony of Holy Scripture, which is my basis; my conscience is captive to the Word of God. Thus I cannot and will not recant, because acting against one's conscience is neither safe nor sound. God help me. Amen."

Scores of Christians from our own Anabaptist faith heritage have made similar assertions, declaring their loyalty to Scripture and conscience against the objection of magistrates, ecclesial councils or even fellow church members. They viewed their disobedience to human authorities as faithful dissent, a response to God's higher calling.

In the last few years, people with varying convictions regarding same-sex marriage have appealed to the role of conscience, acting on their beliefs in the face of contrary council.

What then is the role of conscience in a Believers' Church? What shall we do when convictions clash, with people with different takes on an issue appealing to conscience shaped by the testimony of Scripture? How can one detect the difference between courageous conscientious conviction and everyday stubbornness? Between prophetic insight and insistent self-centeredness? Between Christ-centered communal discernment and rigid social conformity?

In a recent meeting of the Constituency Leaders Council (CLC), we studied Romans 14:1-15:7.

In this Scripture passage, the Apostle Paul honored individual convictions in the face of disagreements on ethical issues such as observance of Jewish dietary laws. "You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister?" he asked. "Or why do you treat your brother or sister with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat" (Romans 14:10).

Even so, Paul did not believe that ethical convictions were purely a matter of individual conscience. Speaking further of dietary practices, he said: "If your brother or sister is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love" (14:15).

And he spoke much more strongly regarding sexual sin in Corinth: "What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. 'Expel the wicked person from among you.' " (1 Corinthians 5:12)

As the CLC studied the Scriptures together, we struggled to understand the proper application of Paul's counsel for our day. Some members felt that Paul's advice to the Romans about Jewish dietary laws or other "disputable matters" could give us helpful guidance in the current controversy over same-sex unions today. Others were convinced that Paul's advice to the Corinthians regarding sexual immorality (see 1 Corinthians 5:1-12) was much more applicable. The disagreements seemed to hinge on differing convictions about sexual ethics.

Like Paul, we must find a way to honor both individual conscience and the value of *Gelassenheit* (yieldedness) in the face of disagreements. Further, we must distinguish the difference between disputable matters and those issues that require communal agreement.

Above the din of arguments arising from a clash of conscience, I hear Paul's plea to the Romans as good counsel for our day: "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification" (Romans 14:19). TM

Ervin Stutzman is executive director of Mennonite Church USA.

How can one detect the difference between courageous conscientious conviction and everyday stubbornness?

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A baby for today

Anna Groff

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.—Luke 2:7

God sent Jesus as an infant to the world centuries ago. This remains a message we desperately need to hear today.

While discussing high schoolers and technology at a dinner gathering in October, I said, "I hate to say this, but I worry about the world my daughter will grow up in."

Someone at the table asked, "Why? Because you sound like a parent?"

Exactly.

2014 is not 1984, which is not 1914—which is *definitely* not the same world that Jesus came into as a little baby.

As Gordon Houser wrote in a Christmas article in *The Mennonite* last year, "The Almighty Creator took shape as a mewling, hungry baby born to a Jewish girl in an animal trough in an obscure, backwater village in the outskirts of the Roman Empire millennia ago."

We often elevate the Christmas story as an untouchable birth story, yet Mary's body experienced the same stages of labor and delivery as I did.

However, in the midst of the globalization, empiricism, materialism, perfectionism and general busyness of today, a needy, tiny infant offers a profound message.

Sure, the idea of Jesus as a helpless and humble baby is not new, but as a first-time parent I have a new appreciation for what adults can learn from babies—and how that relates to what we can learn from Jesus' life which began as a baby.

1. Babies teach us to live in the present. Nothing distracts me more than my daughter's laugh or smile. We can lose ourselves while gazing into the face of an infant and experience a lo unlike any other. Jesus gently chided his discipl for rushing or thinking that doing was better th being.

2. Babies allow us to care for them. In mo cases, babies do not put up a fight when an adul offers a diaper change or a feeding or a soothing touch. Far more radical as an adult, Jesus allowe people to wash his feet and pour perfume on them.

3. While babies are born more or less th same way, each baby and birth story is unique. relish hearing the stories of my friends becomi parents, as well as sharing my own. Some of us want all the details—what the mother ate whe she went into labor, how they got to the hospit or birth center, how the father felt and what the parents thought when they first saw their baby.

Traditional church pageants omit the pain, stress and bodily fluids of giving birth—distanc Jesus' birth from our birth stories. We often elevate the Christmas story as an untouchable bir story, yet Mary's body experienced the same stages of labor and delivery as I did.

As Hannah Heinzekehr writes on page 14: "Lest we forget, the Christmas story is an eart one. It's about something nebulous or mystical- God's Word and Spirit—becoming something ta gible and made of human flesh."

Yes, Christ's birth was a miracle, but what is also miraculous is that—despite medical and te nological advances—childbirth remains a myste ous experience shared throughout history.

This season, notice the babies around you. What can you learn about Jesus and his love fro observing an infant? Also, listen to the birth sto with fresh ears and a creative imagination. Let's not overlook the mystery of Christ's birth.—*ag*

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